



A Rationalist

*Orator Henley. Taken from the Life at the
oratory Chapel in Lincoln's Inn Fields
He died in 1756.*



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THE (S.)
COUP DE GRACE:

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Mr. *BAYLE*'s Prophecy fulfilled,
In *LUTHER* JUNIOR his LAST STROKE
to compleat the REFORMATION.

INVALIDATING the TITLE

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ECCLESIASTICAL ESTATES;

Proving they are forfeited to the Families, from
whom they were plundered, or ought to be
restored to GOD and the CHURCH, to whom
they were given; *i. e.* our Country, that wants
them to pay Debts and Taxes, &c.

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Argument from the MAXIMS of LAW, and the Constitution,
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REIGN or Reveal'd RELIGION and JURISDICTION before
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With a new Decisive Dissertation, *viz.* A fair and final Challenge to
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matical Demonstration, as the only Criterion of Reveal'd Reli-
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senters, and a Scientific Method to solve it for ever.

Particularly Necessary for Gentlemen, Students in the Universities
Scholars, Students and Professors of the Law, and the Mathematicians,

Note, *A Great Prelate has owned, there ought to be no Persecution, and
has invited all to examine his Religion.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for W. WEBB, near St. Paul's, and to be had at all Book-
sellers in Town and Country. 1745:

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A NEW
Decisive DISSERTATION, &c.

SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLES.

THE Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul: The Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the Simple: The Statutes of the Lord are right, true and righteous altogether. Every Word of God is pure. To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to his Word, it is because there is no Light in them. I will shew thee that which is noted in the Scripture of Truth. The Word of God abideth for ever, and this is the Word, which by the Gospel is preached unto you. Ye shall not add to the Word, nor diminish from it. Add thou not unto his Words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a Liar. Men, by their Traditions, make void the Word of God, reject his Command, make it of none Effect. Your reasonable Service. Faith is the Evidence of Things not seen: Immutable, strong, sure, stedfast: Proportion of Faith. Nothing wavering. That ye may know the Certainty of these Things, wherein ye have been instructed. Zeal according to Knowledge. Be ready always to give a Reason of the Hope that is in you. Peace in believing. Full Assurance of Faith, immoveable, without doubting. Demonstration of the Spirit and Power. In the Beginning was Reason. Reason was with God, and Reason was God: God is Light, the true Light that lighteth every Man; why of yourselves know ye not that which is right? There is a Spirit in Man, and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth him Understanding. The Manifestation [or Revelation] of the Spirit is given to every Man. The Fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodness, and Righteousness and Truth. Ye are manifestly declared to be the Epistle of Christ, written not with Ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God. Not in
Tables

Tables of Stone, but in fleshly Tables of the Heart: The Anointing is Truth, and no Lye. God has given us the Spirit of Power and of a sound Mind. The Faith of God's Elect, the Acknowledgment of the Truth, which is after Godliness. Not handling the Word of God deceitfully. God, Christ, the Spirit, are Truth. The Church is the Pillar and Ground of Truth. That thy Faith fail not. The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. The Foundation of God standeth sure: Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees; &c.

So that the Scripture itself requires, as Marks of Reveal'd Religion, Perfection, Certainty, Truth, Infallibility, Universality, Right, Purity, Freedom from Sin, Defect, or Adulteration, true Writing, and Scripture genuine: Eternal Permanency, no Addition, or Diminution; not defeated by Tradition: unchangeable, necessary, undoubted Evidence; Proportion or Ratio of Faith, which is demonstrable: Demonstration itself; Full Assurance, Reason, all Truth, no Lye, no Deceit, &c. if it wants any one of these Marks, it is not Reveal'd Religion.

In a Religion *suppos'd to be*, much more, *impos'd as*, REVEAL'D from GOD, there ought not be *one Difficulty*, *not one Uncertainty*, *not one Imperfection*, *not one Immorality*, *not one Contradiction*, *Absurdity*, or *Impossibility in the Obligation*, *not one Error*, *Falshood* or *Fallacy*;

But to come from God, to be worthy of him, it ought to be totally and invariably LIKE GOD, all Beauty, Splendor and Perfection, without Spot or Wrinkle, or any such thing, Holy and without Blemish; deform'd by no Guile, Sin, or Darkness at all; directly and immediately, to be undoubtedly, reveal'd by him.

Especially, as it is presumed (in human Language, and according to our Ideas), to be a kind of *Second*, or *After-Thought*, a Reformation of what was deficient before, an Improvement upon and Addition to our natural Powers and Discoveries; a Removal of all the Obscurities, Doubts, and Evils complain'd of in the State of sinful and corrupt Nature, an entire Absence of all that was liable to Censure, and a full convincing Presence of all that was or could be conceived to be good, right, and desirable.

Nor will this Way of arguing be shaken by the Consequence, that, therefore, *the World*, abounding with Sin and Pain, could not be from God: Since there has been no such presum'd *After-thought* in the Reformation of the Natural

World, as is directly suppos'd in a *new Positive Reveal'd Religion*: In the latter is expressly a *second Model*, which therefore ought to be *unexceptionable*; we can prove the *World is not from Man*, whereas *Reveal'd Religion*, consider'd as an *additional System* to the *Light of Reason*, is capable, in every Step of being traced to be from Man only, overspread with all his Infirmities; and we would cheerfully embrace *Reveal'd Religion*, so call'd, if it was recommended to us by Evidence of its proceeding from God, equal to what we discern in the Structure of the World, with all its Objections; tho' I do not enter into that Question, it is not my present Business to prove the World is or is not from God, only so far as to shew the Case is not parallel; for also,

Every Being in the World is *perfect in its Kind*, however *relatively imperfect*; *Positive Reveal'd Religion* is not perfect in its Kind, in any Scheme that ever was offer'd; it is, not in a *mere respective Sense*, but, absolutely, *imperfect*; for, as *reveal'd*, it ought to be *all light, clear, irresistibly evident* to the *Understanding*; because God, by a *new Turn of Things* imply'd in the *very Idea*, must be imagin'd to make it so: Not such, as to leave us in a more perplex'd and bewilder'd Condition, than we were in before: To REVEAL, is to do something over again, well and to the Point, which was not so thoroughly done before, but left to that new Operation to accomplish: It is the contrary, therefore it has an *essential Contradiction*, and *could not be from God*.

To mend the Matter, and not to mend it, at the same Time, and demand our Belief of it; when the Obligation includes an Impossibility to know it is from God; to say it is from God with all the Marks and Phænomena of its being from Man: That it flows from an infinitely good Being, when there are apparent Enormities in it, is to take away the Criterion between an infinitely Good and an Evil Spirit, introduce Diabolism and Atheism by a necessary Consequence, subvert all Evidence and Certainty, command us to think without Ideas, and reason against Reason.

Indeed, strictly, we are not obliged to prove in *Opposition to Reveal'd Religion*: But the *Onus probandi*, the Burden and Duty of the Proof lies on those, who assert it: We are in possession of and maintain the Affirmative, that *Reason is sufficient Religion, to all Intents and Purposes*: They defend the *Negative* and affirm *Revelation*: They, with

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us, own the *Existence of Reason*, so that they are concluded by our *Part*, as the Protestants are concluded by the Papists, in owning *Tradition*: They agree with us so far, and are *Rationalists*: But we do not in any degree admit *Revelation* to be so much as a *Matter of Fact*: Nor has it ever, nor can it be proved to be a *Matter of Fact*: They are bound to prove its *Existence*; till then, it is a *Non-entity* to us, a *Chimæra*.

But since they have not, with all their *Evidence*, superior *Light*, and *Infallibility*, got any farther yet, than to give us a mere *Woman's Reason* for it, that it is so, and shall be, because it is and shall be; since they have carry'd us yet no farther than *implicit Faith*, *captivating* or *enslaving* us to its *Obedience*, that is, *their Dominion*, bid us shut our Eyes and see, or open them, and see only what they civilly enjoin us, I will endeavour to suggest one Method, at present, (there may be different and more elegant Methods even of *Demonstration* itself,) of deciding this Question by *self-evident Principles*, such as must produce, in the Proof, *Demonstration*, and in the Mind, *Science*.

Reasons, why we demand *absolute Demonstration* of *Reveal'd Religion*, are, that to believe and therefore act by an *Imposture*, may be a *dammable Sin*, that Faith ought to be *indubious*, by the Scripture itself, without *Doubt* or *Wavering*, *stedfast*, *evident*, *analogous*, *unmoveable* or *unchangeable*, with full *Assurance*, and *Demonstration of the Spirit and Power*; which are the *Characteristicks* of *absolute mathematical Demonstration*; so that no Man can possess a *Scripture Faith* without it: Nor can any Person have a *Criterion*, or distinguishing Mark, that it is from God, unless it be as *intuitive* as God's Omniscience and Power can make it; it ought to be such, as *must necessarily* come from God; otherwise none can be bound to believe it is from God: If it may be from any but God, it is not *necessarily Divine*, nor of a *Divine Obligation*: Because there is a *formido contrarii* still left, a Fear, and Scruple, a Doubt, a *Possibility* it may not be from God: Which contradicts even Scripture-Faith admitting no Doubt at all: And it contradicts the Necessity arising from the Attributes of God; for it is absurd to suppose that God would reveal a Religion, the Essence of which involves an Obligation to receive and obey it, without giving it all that Evidence which infinite Knowledge, Power, Truth, &c. could bestow upon it, which is *intuitive Knowledge*, for God can
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demonstrate, and more adæquately than Man; so that strictly it would require more than what we commonly call *Mathematical Demonstration*.

For Instance, in the Case of the *incommensurable Quantities*, the *Assymptots*, and what *Sturmius* and others call the *Incomprehensibles* of the *Mathematicks*, God must be suppos'd to have the adæquate *Idea*, and *Power* of *Demonstration*, which Man has not; but he may have both, or all the *Data* of *Facts*, if God reveals them;

Religion is a Case of greater Importance than the *Mathematicks*, it binds the Conscience to Belief and Obedience under the highest Sanctions to Eternity: If God revealed it, he would give it proportionable Certainty; and those who inculcate it, the Ability to display it by more clear and satisfactory *Media*, than the utmost Efforts in Geometry and Algebra pursued by human Investigation can supply. On the contrary, it has no Method, no Definitions, no clear distinct regular Process;

They, who affirm that Reveal'd Religion is NECESSARY, oblige themselves to *demonstrate* it, for *necessary Truths* are the Object of *Demonstration*.

Mr. *Warburton* and they who agree with him MUST join Issue on this Head, for he pretends to *demonstrate* the *Divine Legation* of *Moses*:

Kablius, in his *Logic*, has avowedly pointed out a Way to bring the Calculation of *Matters of Fact* to the Evidence of Arithmetic; the Author of *computing the Degrees of Credibility*, in the *Philosophical Transactions*, has done the same; *Du Moivre* the like, by *Chances* or *Contingencies*, so all, who have written upon *Games of Chance*: All, who require *rational Faith* due to *Revelation* oblige themselves to *demonstrate its Ratio* — to alledge, that a *Ratio* is not *demonstrable*, and yet require and command it in *Rational Faith*, is a Contradiction in Terms.

If *Revelation* be not demonstrable, it falls by another *Contradiction*, and that is, that the Scripture itself makes the Mark of *Demonstration*, *indubious Evidence*, requisite to it: And no Book or Evidence contradicting itself can be from God.

We will agree to receive it, as from God, even supposing the *Matters of Fact* in it can be proved in a Way, equal to that *Demonstration*, which in Cases of *Moral Virtue* is affirm'd by *Puffendorf*, *Woolaston*, *Cudworth*, *Wolffius*, *More*, *Spinoza*, *Du Hamel*, *Locke*, *Barbeyrac*, &c.

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If they can produce *one competent Witness* to evince a *Moral Obligation* (waving the *positive Divine Obligation*, which is out of all Reach), to believe there ever was such a Person as *Moses* or *Jesus Christ*, we will receive it: By a competent Witness I mean, one, of a known and an impartial disinterested Character, who knew either of them, and whose Testimony is genuinely extant: Who is that Witness? Father *Harduin* himself, the learned Jesuit, well acquainted with antient Writings, is represented by *Menken*, in his *Charlatanerie des Scavans*, to have asserted, not only that *all antient Books* have been falsify'd, but that there always was a *Society of Falsifiers or Forgers*, to alter and sham them on Mankind for private Interest, or that of their Body; Did he mean by that *Society*, the *Church* of the *Jews*, and of *Christ*, (so called) in whose Writings are discover'd so many Alterations, Suppressions, Fallacies, &c. and whose Interest it always was to change and turn them, as they pleased? This is not the Case of *all History*, of *Alexander* or *Cæsar*, there was no Interest of a perpetual Confederacy to impose on Mankind. Is there one Person in the *Christian Church*, who is or is not insolent and oppressive, on its Power and Revenues, who will fairly stand this, or any Argument, before the People, on the Truth of Revelation, by a distinct and full Analysis, without Sophistry, Corruption, Tumult, Riot, Violence, Expense, indirect Conduct, or practising on Great Men, Judges, Magistrates, or Juries, to over-rule the Question, or give a sinister Turn to it? If Revelation be true, they are all bound to it, it renders it their Duty: If they do not stand it, if they sculk behind the Throne, make a Screen of a Minister, call Names, set on foot Prosecutions, take Refuge in their Authority, their Ascendent, their Party, getting the implicit Faith of Women, Children, the Prejudic'd, the Ignorant, the Terrify'd, the Bigot, the Superstitious, on their Side, or other Artifices, by which alone *their Revelation* has been exalted, it is a Proof, they do not themselves believe it, but are *Infidels of Faith*, a living Contradiction, Monsters, and ought to be call'd to Account, for having been, in all Ages, Aggressors on the Rights of Human Nature.

We challenge *Demonstration*, because otherwise, we cannot have the requisite Security, that *their Revelation* must necessarily be from God, and not from mere Man, or an evil or imperfect Being; and because, *Matters of Fact*, which to us, are *Contingencies*, yet, consider'd in God, a neces-

necessary Being, are necessary, for there is no Composition in God, of necessary and contingent; God has all the Data, he can make them to Man what they are to himself, Self-evident; he will do what he can to reveal them, and if he does not, they are no Revelation.

Alexander and Caesar are not injoin'd on Men, to be believed; these are: Faith being Assent to the Testimony of a Witness, that Testimony of that Witness ought to be brought: Even Dr. Bentley, in his admired *Phileleutherus Lipsiensis* against Mr. Collins, has given up the Point, in maintaining, that the Text of Revelation, is not in this or that Manuscript or Scripture, (Scriptures are Manuscripts and nothing else), but in ALL; ALL are impossible to be had, none is oblig'd to an Impossibility, therefore not to believe a TEXT, or ANY TRADITION, of REVELATION, the Obligation of which subsists in ALL, for the Integrity or Entireness, the Totality, of that Text, of that Tradition.

If it be not real but political or canonical Faith, or Assent, (political and canonical are the same, one in the State, for civil Convenience only, the other in the Church, for the Like,) that is requir'd, if only the Profession of Faith, be claim'd, let us be plainly told it, and we have Revelation and Policy the same at once: That we subscribe, we assent, we read, hear, and join in, Common-Prayers, Creeds, and the rest, as Acts of Parliament, or of Councils and Synods, in our own Construction, the State or Church having limited none, and one private Person's Sense of them being as good as another: What are Books of Piety, Pastoral Letters, Bishops Charges, Sermons, and the other Apparatus of this Machinery, but the Sentiments of private Men, which may not be even those of the Church they belong to, but mislead from Church or Meeting-Principles, while they seem to be in it: What is Dr. Taylor, Dr. Horneck, Dr. Lake, or Dr. Gibson, to me or any Person, about Prayer, a good Life, or the Sacrament, or other Duties: I am not bound by any Law of God to think about them, nor to inquire, whether there ever was a Father, a Council, a Synod, an University, a Convocation, a Preacher, a Church or Meeting, a Bishop, Priest or Deacon, in the World: Where is that Law of God? If none, it is prudential, and discretionary: Every Person may be, if he be just to his Reason, to GOD, his own Bishop; no need of the CHARGE: A Romish Priest, F. Fournier, in his HYDROGRAPHY or History of the Admiralty of France, on the Question, Whether, in the want of a
Chaplain

Chaplain at Sea, a Man might not, in Danger of Death, give himself the Sacrament, if the Host consecrated be in the Ship; quotes *Cajetan* and *Suarez* for it: And why may he not consecrate it himself, as well as give it himself; or do better by Consecrating, Sanctifying, himself without it, since every where he that worketh Righteousness is accepted of God, the pure in Heart shall see God, God is worshipped in Spirit and Truth, and *Paul* speaks of reasonable Service and Sacrifice, Rom. xii. i.

The general Principles of Reason and Virtue, or of the Attributes of God, (which are the same, or we could not know, what it is to be like God), are to one, who makes a right Use of his Faculties, as clear as the Sun, till obscured by Revelation; and so are the Consequences of them: Let Common Sense, with a rational Education and Improvement, alone to itself, undebauch'd by Romance, and the World would soon be wiser, better and happier: Ends opposed by such Extra-natural Chimæras, as tend to render Mankind Fools, Knaves, Slaves and Wretches.

I would beg Leave to address two Cases of Conscience, on this Subject, one to the Bishops and their Disciples as Protestants, the other, to Dissenters, Ministers and People, as professing to act on a conscientious Foundation.

First to the Bishops, &c. as Protestants; that, having renounc'd Popery, they cannot, with a safe Conscience, possess the Revenues and Rights annex'd only to Popery and those Uses by the Donors: Which being the Reason of the Laws whereby they hold them, that ceasing, their Title ceases: And further, that, by renouncing Popery they renounced Reveal'd Religion by an immediate Consequence, and their Rights from it; for, by renouncing the Superstitions, as themselves term them, introduc'd by those who brought the News of Christianity itself, they renounced all Certainty of the Truth of any thing they taught; they renounc'd the Whole, which was of the Nature of ALL OR NONE: They disclaim'd their own Witnesses; for the Pope's Supremacy, or the Duty of Communion with the See of Rome, is as much the Doctrine of Tradition as the Bible: Their Income is equally devoted to Superstitious Uses in what they keep of Christianity, as what they have thrown away, and therefore as liable to be taken from them: The Revenues they hold are equally the Property of the Poor, that is, of the Country, as those of the Church of Rome were of the Poor, who begg'd an Alms: There is as much Evidence of the Truth of Popery as of other Parts of Christianity; the

particular Doctrines of *Rome* cannot be false, on the Principles of the Church of *England*, which commands the Reception of *Church-Authority* in Matters both of *Faith* and *Ceremonies*, supposing the *Romish Church-Authority* be, as it is, on the same Footing with the *Scripture-Authority*; the Fathers are mostly popish Saints, and the Confutations of Popery are Confutations of Christianity: So that if one be false, all is, the Truth of all depends on the same Testimony of Tradition, and the same Authority of those, who deliver'd the System to *England*: *Chillingworth's Cry of the Bible, the Bible*, the Religion of Protestants, is a Mistake: There is not a Protestant Church that does not enjoin more than the Bible, even their own Sense and Use of it: And the *Bible* is by *Tradition*: Except, as rationally explain'd and apply'd, which does not depend on *Christianity* or *Tradition*, but *Argument*. The Scripture received down from the first Ages, from *Ignatius, Irenæus, Cyprian, Augustin, Chrysostom, Hilary, Jerom, Ambrose, Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, &c.* is therefore embraced, the same Witnesses attest the Doctrine of one Universal Church, under the Primacy of, or in Communion with, the See of *Rome*, from *St. Peter*:

The *Church*, one visible Body, with an invisible Head, or with a hundred visible Bodies and a hundred visible Heads, would, to *them*, have been thought a Prodigy.

As the *Papists* conclude the *Protestants* by their own Evidence, as a *Concession* and a *prior Argument*, so the *Rationalists* conclude BOTH by the Like, i. e. *Right Reason*, which BOTH agree to be the Rule by which *Revelation* is to be known and distinguished: As the *Papists* pronounce, that the *Protestants* cannot be saved or be in a State of Acceptance with God, because they are *αἰσχρὰ*, as *Paul* speaks of the *Heretic*, i. e. Self-condemned by their own Evidence, and voluntarily excommunicated by their own deserting the Catholic Church, in Contra-distinction to those, who are condemn'd or excommunicated by a *judicial Sentence*, in Form; (for, after all the Speculations of *Dr. Stebbing* and *Mr. Foster* on *Heresy*, that is the most probable Sense of the Word *αἰσχρὰ*;) in the same Manner, the *Rationalists* might, if one Man could judge another, pronounce both *Papists* and *Protestants* not saved, not in a State of Acceptance with God, because they are self-condemn'd by their own Evidence, their own

Witness,

Witness, *right Reason*, and thereby voluntarily excommunicated by their own deserting the one Catholic Church or Society of *rational Beings*, the proper *Civitas Dei*, or City of God, whereof God is the Head, to follow the *Heresy* of *Reveal'd Religion*, a *Party* or *Faction* against the prior Rights of Human Nature, Aggressors on Mankind, idolising the Word of Man, instead of honouring Right Reason as the Word of God: For *prior Obligatio supersedet posteriori*, the prior Obligation of Right Reason supercedes the latter of Reveal'd Religion, where there is a Contradiction between them, as there is, when Right Reason commands only to receive that which is rational, moral, suitable to the Divine Attributes, and self-evidently from God, as his Word, and a System of Revelation is commanded, on the other Hand, which is repugnant to all of them.

For as to other *fæderal Societies*, or *Churches*, they are built on meer *Will*, on *political Consent*, which may be given to the Church of *Rome* for the same Reason as to the Churches of *England*, *Scotland*, &c. and to the Former, *a' fortiori*: Especially on the *Codex-principle*, which is the Authority of *Popes and Legates*; and that would establish *them* and the *Pretender* here; but the Church of Right Reason is not built on meer Will, its Principles are unchangeable, eternal and necessary, and other Churches carry the same Marks of *Heresy* in deviating from that, which any of those attribute, in their Turn, to one another: *Heresy* is a *Party*, *Partiality* is the Character of it, against any True Society; in *Revelation*, the God of All is made *partial* to this or that Person or People; and vesting Man with God's incommunicable Power, another Absurdity; so that as the *Papists* claim an Advantage over the *Protestants*, that the *Protestants* own them, but they do not own the *Protestants*, the *Rationalists* have the Advantage over both, that both own right Reason, but it owns neither of them.

This is the first *Case of Conscience* address'd to the Bishops, under the Head of the *Romish Revenues kept still for superstitious Uses*, not for those of Justice and Charity; their being concluded by their own Evidence, Right Reason; and having renounced their Witnesses of Reveal'd Religion, by renouncing those of Popery, which stands on the same Footing.

The second *Case of Conscience* is address'd to the *Dis-senters*, as Professors of acting by the Light of *Conscience*, or *Right Reason*, in a peculiar Manner; that they are more over-ruled by this Consideration to reject Reveal'd Religion, if they find it contains one Defect, or Blemish opposite to Reason, as to Belief, Doctrine, or Manners:

But there is one Point by which they are obliged to proceed, *ex concessis*, to be consistent with their own Principles;

They oppose the *Inventions of Men in the Worship of God*: They approve, in general, a Book, called the *Altare Damascenum*, or Altar of *Damascus*, in which the Superstitions of Popery retained by Protestants are made unlawful, because of *Pagan Extraction*: Since we are forbidden to do after the Works of the *Heathens*, or to go a Whoring after their Inventions:

Now if the Original of *Revelation*, of *Inspiration*, in general, besides many particular Usages founded on it, mentioned by various Authors, *De Laune*, *Stopford*, *An Account of antient Ceremonies in Twelves*, *Dr. Morestin of Aberdeen*, and more lately, in the *Parallel between the Pagans and Jesuits*, and by *Dr. Middleton*, &c. If these appear to be of *Pagan Extraction*, to be *Inventions of Men in the Worship of God*, they are bound by their own Reasons to disclaim them.

Dr. Spenser, de Legibus Hebræorum, labours to prove, that *Moses* himself copy'd many of his Ordinances from the *Egyptians*, to suit the popular Taste, whereas, by the Way, that destroys the Credit of *Revelation*, for its Intention must be, not to humour and gratify, but to rectify popular Errors; so that all the Explications of Texts, which proceed upon the *ανδρωποτασεια*, as they call it, or the Condescension to the popular Taste and Way of thinking, are so many Arguments against the Truth of Revealed Religion, which ought not to flatter that Taste, but change and reform it: This is incidental: for, indeed, not a Step can be taken, but it accumulates the Proof, that Reveal'd Religion is a Contradiction.

Many Authors have study'd to display the *Similitude* of the reveal'd Laws and Ceremonies, with the antient Pagan; aswell as the Derivation of them from the Pagan: Authorities of this Tendency abound in *Gale's Court of the Gentiles*, *Cunæus de Republicâ Hebræorum*, the *Opuscula* of *Crenius*, *Bochart*, *Van Dale*, *Calmet*, *Burnet*, *Hornius*, *Hody*,
Whiston,

Whiston, Toland, Collins, Cumberland, Huet, Baker, Le Clerc's Account of the Chaldaic Philosophy from Stanley, Stillingfleet's Origines sacrae, Dr. Stukeley's Palaeographia, where he makes *Bacchus* and *Jehovah* the same, as *Stillingfleet* was said to do *Jupiter* and *Jehovah*: — besides many Antiquaries and Criticks, on the same Subject; to enumerate them would exceed all Bounds.

It is very certain, that there was *Inspiration* among the old Pagans, *Revelation*, *Divine Books*, *Oracles*, or *Answers of their Gods*, and *Communication with them*, pretended: Many of their Legislators affirm'd, they receiv'd their Laws from the Gods, to give Weight to them, as *Moses* did: And some of the *Jewish Rabbins* have declared that to be a Reason of the *Judaical and Oriental Style* of speaking in the Name of God, and from God; what was excellent, extraordinary, and not very accountable, was said to be from God, Θεῶν, *Divine*; so that this Style may come under the Figure ἀνδρωποπαθεια, or Compliance with the People's Language, and mean no more than this, *God spake*, that is, *the People think or talk in this way, and are to be taken by it: Cedars of God, Rivers of God, Mountain of God*, and the like Phrases, often occur, which were no more from God than others: like *Religion reveal'd from God*.

The *Jews* are call'd *Egyptians* in some *Greek Authors*, and *Moses* was said to be skill'd in the Wisdom of the *Egyptians*; the *Pagans* could not receive their Religion from the *Jewish Writings*; *Dr. Turner*, in his two Dissertations, has prov'd, that the *Books of the Law* were kept by the *High-Priest*, and tho' the King was to have a Copy, yet neither he nor the People knew more of those books, than the Priests told them: the *Pagans* could not be free with Books which were conceal'd from the *Jews* themselves:

The Antiquity of the present Books of *Moses* and of the *Old Testament* is very precarious, if not false: but, even supposing, that *Moses's Books* are more antient than others, it does not follow they are genuine as we have them, nor, that his Religion was not, in the main, derived from the *Pagan*; for that might be the Case, notwithstanding the prior Antiquity of his Books to any now extant: And one Reason, that Religion was not taken by the *Pagans*, from our *Revelation*, is, because they discourse and reason about it, whereas *Revelation* is more dogmatical than

than *rational*; in one Word, the *Pagans* commonly talk'd *Sense*, the others *Nonsense*.

The Bible itself presupposes the Existence of *Reveal'd Religion* among *Pagans*; as to *Adam's History*, and that of the *Ante-diluvians*, the Chronology of the *Hebrew* and *Septuagint* is so contradictory, the Opinions of Divines and Criticks, are so different, on *Adam's History* being real or a Parable, it is so unattested by others, and so questionable in all Parts, that the *Revealers* can build no Certainty upon that Foundation:

Let the Age and Authenticity of Manuscripts and Copies, let the Facts and Dates, let the Disputes about the *Æra* of the Creation, about the antient Chronology, about the Authority of the *Hebrew*, *Samaritan*, *Septuagint*, and *Latin Vulgate*, about *Josephus's* Difference from the Bible, about *Ezra's* framing the *Hebrew Canon*, about the Writings before and after the Captivity, about the Derivation of the New Testament and Christian Theology from the *Pagans*, *Plato*, &c. about the *Hellenists*, about *forged Books*, as *Daniel* is affirmed to be one by *Collins*, about the Canon itself, in Mr. *Nathaniel Jones*, *Cosins*, *Toland*, Dr. *Clarke*, *Dupin*, *Le Clerc*, and many more: Let these Controversies be examin'd, and the Result will be the Truth of this Proposition, that *Revelation* was first among the *Pagans*, from whom it was translated to those called the *People of God*: And that it is a Miscellaneous System of *Paganism* and *Judaism*: The latter as unlawful to *Christians*, as the former is to *Dissenters* on the Principle of the Inventions of Men unlawful in the Worship of God, and the *Altare Damascenum*.

Nay, it proves it a human Invention that we are obliged to search into all these human Writings in order to rummage out this same Revelation among them; it is impossible for Mankind in general to find it from God, in this wild Heap of Men's confused and doubtful Imaginations; even *Baker's* and *Huet's* Arguments from the Uncertainty and Imperfection of Human Knowledge, destroy its Obligation, as built on *Scriptures and Traditions of Men*, all the way, from first to last; no dissenting Teacher can be a Man of Conscience, who teaches that to be from God, for which he has no Proof but a *Tradition of Man* to support it, nor can any *Lay-Dissenter*, with a safe Conscience, adhere to him, nor a *Church-of-England-man* to his *Bishop or Minister*, till he demands,

and

and the other *alleges*, the Demonstration: Was it reveal'd by God to Man, there would be no Necessity of this Trouble, for He is not far from every one of us, and his Law is *sufficiently promulgated*, i. e. *reveal'd*, in *Right Reason*, in thy Mouth, that thou mayest speak, and in thy Heart, that thou mayest know it: *Christ, Logos, Reason*, is the *Word of God*, the Light that enlighteneth every Man, every *Briton*, that cometh into the World.

Thus, a *reveal'd Religion*, or *Obligation*, from God, by Tradition of *one Man to another*, oral or written, is an Impossibility, a Contradiction: Even on the Evidence required by the Scripture itself: *Faith* is said to be a *Grace*, an *Act of Obedience*, and of *Worship*, in that Light, it is due to God only, and it is making Man God to render it to Man. *David* said, let me fall into the Hand of God, not of Men: I say, let God reveal himself to me, not Man, for then, I am only, or worse than, where I was before.

The Argument urged from the Attributes of God, from the Advantages of Reveal'd Religion, and the Characters of the Excellency, the Perspicuity, the Truth, the Purity, the Majesty of the Word of God, in the Scriptures themselves, prove for *right Reason*, against it; the *Traditions*, that the *Seventy-version* was *inspired*, and that there was to be a *Millennium*, or Thousand Years Reign of *Christ* upon Earth, were general, yet false: *Tradition* cannot be a *Catholic Law from God to Man*, of what is a Duty *semper, ubique, omnibus*, always, every where, to all: There never was a Tradition so qualify'd; the only *original Evidence*, the only *authentic Records*, are the *Scriptures of Truth*, written on the *Tables of the Heart* by the *Finger of God*: *St. John* tells us, *Sin is the Transgression of the Law*: *Paul*, that the *Gentiles* shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, and that God shall judge the Secrets of Men by *Christ* according to his Gospel: Which could only be, *to all*, by the *Law of Reason*, for *all* could not know any other Gospel. So that if the Belief of Revelation be a Transgression of the Law of the *Gentiles*, *Reason*, it is *Sin*, and *Christ* will judge Men for it: By which, what some call *Faith* may be a *dammable Sin*.

Dr. Howardine, a *Romish Priest*, owns, in his Conferences of a Minister and a Catholic, that the Disposition to believe on Proof, makes a Catholic, in the Pale of Salvation: By that, Unbelievers so disposed, are in a State
of

of Salvation ; but we deny, that *Believers in Traditions, Hear-says, and Manuscripts, or Scriptures*, as such, are in that State : Such *Faith*, from *Egypt*, is false, to a Proverb : For none were more fabulous than the *Egyptians* ; if the *Hebrews* were, as some say, from the *Phœnicians*, or *Punicks*, *Fides Punica*, *Punic Faith*, is proverbial ; so *Greek Faith*, *Græcia Mendax* ; *Jewish Faith*, *Credat Judæus*, says *Horace*, let a *Jew* believe it, I cannot : *Roman*, whence comes the Word, *Romance* ; *Fides Gallica*, &c. *Fides Publica*, or *Episcopalis*, Public or Bishop's Faith ; one for paying Debts, another for keeping Promises, &c.

The *Roman Catholic* Author of *Historical Collections* concerning our *English Changes of Religion*, printed in 1674, concludes, that if the Authority of Fathers and Councils be not sufficient to end all Disputes about Faith, it can never be sufficiently determin'd : This, say I, ends Faith : It is not sufficient to end one Dispute about it, but tends to multiply them for ever : We cannot come at one genuine unadulterated Manuscript, that can be depended on, of any Father or Council, much less decide one Controversy in them :

Taking then *Reveal'd Religion*, as a Matter of *Fact* or of *Law*, and considering distinctly any one Article, suppose, *Moses* on the *Mount*, or the *Conception* by the *Spirit*, or *Inspiration*, imply'd to be an Impulse of God's Spirit on that of Man, (and not, in our Sense, an Operation of right Reason planted in living Man by God) first, the Evidence of the Writings is to be settled, in which, modestly, about a thousand Years must be reckon'd as *one Day*, the first Day of a *long Term* : *Over-ruling* is not *Judging* : But it is the arbitrary Sentence of an Inquisitor, which might make *Popery* and the *Pretender* call'd for, for they could do no more, than declare, *it is so, and shall be so, and what do you say to that, Sir?*

To go no farther than our Bible ; that read in Churches is *uncanonical* ; for King *James's* Canons of 1603 enjoin the *Great* or *Bishop's Bible*, preceding his Translation now read : Which is by Order of Council ; the Authority of the Privy Council has been retrench'd since that Time ; the present Bible may be contrary to Act of Parliament, for the Act of *Uniformity* forbids any thing to be said in the Prayers which is not order'd by that Act : If the *Scriptures* be farther judg'd by the Principles of Evidence
receiv'd

receiv'd by Law, it is impossible to know or prove them : Nor does the Law *define Inspiration* : our Sense of it is the *only legal one*, as Reason is the Ground of Law, of the *Original Compact*, of the *Civil Trust* we lodge in our Governors, free from any *foreign Jurisdiction*, not admitting two Independent Empires in one Government : Motions of the Spirit, Miracles, and unrecorded Acts, are *coram non judice*, none can judicially determine about them.

All Courts may have been misinform'd ; where there is no Depravity of Will, as there is not in our Rational Religion, avowedly founded on a sincere Disposition to be more truly directed, and our *Birth-rights* are at Stake, we cannot be culpable ; let Judgments proceed *secundum Allegata & Probata*, according to *Allegations and Proofs, legal Evidences of Writings and Traditions, or Customs, and Maxims of Law*, and we are right.

Christianity is a *Misnommer*, it means the Law of *Christ*, he wrote none, and did not speak any Language now extant.

It is hoped, it will be *one Effect* of this *new Enquiry*, that others will more fully and critically examine our Laws concerning Religion. The partial Quotations of the *Codex*, and its Doctrines, are not to be rely'd on : We have many valuable Lights on this Head, from *Holt's Reports, Mallory's Quare impedit* ; the Learned Mr. *Bohun's PARSON'S LAW*, (as to which the Public ought to beware of a mutilated and corrupt Edition of it, which, some tell us, is preparing for the Press by other Hands, not so just, nor judicious, nor friendly to our proper Liberties), some Pieces written on the *King's Visitatorial Power*, in the Time of King *James II. Prynne's Works*, and others of that Time : The Register of Writs, Reports, and Cases on these Matters, especially on *Prohibitions*, and others, of which I intend a Catalogue ; that young Students, &c. may not be misled by the *Codex*, or Dr. *Grey's fanatical Catechism* of it.

Demonstration cannot, reciprocally, be required of us, since we do not impose a Religion, nor a Scripture, requiring such Evidence : We pretend to Moral Demonstration, and on certain *Postulates*, with certain *Data*, one, as Equivalent to the Mathematical, as the necessary, eternal, and immutable Reasons are of *True and False, Good and Evil*.

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It was an original Contradiction, that any *Civil Community*, as such (and it could only act in *that Trust*), should attempt to introduce *Spiritual Matters*, or such as belong to Religion, into Temporal Laws: Except in a Negative Sense, that no Pretences of *Positive* or *Extraneous Religion* should be allow'd to interfere with the Civil Contract of *Rulers and Ruled*: Since any Man may say that he comes from God, and no Court can take Cognizance of what is Spiritual: It is all in *foro interiori*, in the Court of Conscience: No Judge or Jury can strictly hold or suffer Plea of it: No Spirit, good or bad, can appear in Court, or his Spiritual Acts: Nor can they be certify'd: Or be any way Parties: It is contrary to the Nature of Things, and therefore to the Reason of the common Law. An *Englishman* may claim his Right not to be impos'd on in Religion, not to have his Understanding, his Honour, his Fortune, Family, and Person affronted, impair'd, and insulted by the Indignity of a Fraud, in this, as well as any thing else: A Facility, a Readiness of Proof to a Court is annexed to the Idea of Revelation: If not capable of immediate Demonstration to them and all the World, it is *not reveal'd*; not a *Law promulg'd*; so that when Bishops are called *Spiritual Lords*, and the *Spirituality* is mention'd in Statutes, it carries an Implication of *visible Invisibles*: It cannot be said, that *Natural Religion* is not sufficient to Society, when it is the only Rule or *Jus Gentium* between several Nations, now of different Religions; the Experiment has not been try'd in any particular Nation: *Craze* has hinder'd it; it is an Enemy to corrupt Politicks, and a Nation would only be too happy, which establish'd no more than *Natural Religion*: It would be like Heaven itself, where *God is All in All*: There is no Faith, no Protestantism, Popery, or Church, there: There is no Distinction of Natural and Reveal'd Religion: Which was occasion'd by the latter, a *Phantasm*, *no Fact*: And our present *Jerusalem* ought to be an Image of that to come.

The undoubted Demonstrative, and Scientific Method, to solve this for ever, is, by agreeing on fix'd *Postulata*, *first Truths*, and *Axioms*, or *Received Truths*, *Maxims*, and acknowledg'd Principles; Definitions, and distinct Proofs in a Geometrical Way: as, let it be a *Postulatum* that, the Intellectual and Moral Attributes of God are the Standard of religious Perfection: Let these be *Received Truths*, in Consequence, that those are his Will and Law;

that

that what is inconsistent with all or any of them, yet imposed as Religion, is a Contradiction in Terms: That there can be but this one Test of Religion, and Worship, as one God: That Religion is Obligation: That where there is no Obligation there is no Religion: That where an Impossibility is required, there is no Obligation, nor therefore Religion, nor therefore Reveal'd Religion: That, where Faith is requir'd without competent Testimony, an Impossibility is requir'd: That where a Revelation is imposed, unworthy of God or Man, as a rational and moral Being, in any one Respect, it is not Divine, &c. Then let there be a Definition or Description of Reveal'd Religion; and every Article of it reduced to this Test: Or one Article, and the Controversy will be soon over:

So let it be a *Postulatum*, as to the Bishop's, &c. Revenues, in Law, that the fundamental invariable Maxims and Grounds of Law are to determine all positive Laws and Customs about them;

DEFINITION, or *Description*: Reveal'd Religion is a System of positive Laws sufficiently promulg'd by God to the Person it is intended to oblige, revealing Matters essential to his Duty, Perfection, and Happiness, which he could not discover by his Natural Reason, and which by its external and internal Characters must necessarily and directly be from God himself, without the least Cause to scruple the contrary that may incur the Sin and Danger of Imposture, Idolatry, Blasphemy, Atheism, or making Man God: Thus binding his Assent and Practice in Conscience, under the Sanction of Acceptance or Non-acceptance with God, present and eternal.

Another Demonstrative Principle, is from Self-consciousness, the only Proof of our Being, from which the Attributes of Truth, Reason, Justice, Equity, Goodness, Wisdom, Power, necessarily arise, and give the strict Idea of all the Religion and Conscience that can oblige, without farther Necessity, even to such as might deny a God.

The indispensable Mark is, in Reveal'd Religion, indubious Certainty, all possible Perfection, no Absurdity or Contradiction: Otherwise it is a Non-entity, as every Contradiction is.

To *Lesley's Four Marks* in his Address to the *Deist*, I oppose the *Four Maxims of Law*, p. 24. and the Description and Discourse above, which no Reveal'd Religion can stand the Test of.

ratio

Prove

Prove all Things, examine yourselves whether ye be in the Faith, try the Spirits whether they be of God, when they say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or lo there, believe them not, there are false Christs and false Prophets, Give not heed to seducing Spirits and Doctrines of Dæmons, as *Dæmons* were the *Pagan Gods* with *Revelation*: Why of yourselves judge ye not that which is right, &c.

Yet the Texts contradict those which speak of our being captivated or enslaved to the Obedience of Faith, of being blessed in not seeing, yet believing; that of ourselves we can do nothing; it is not in Man that walketh, to direct his Steps: He that believeth not shall be damned, &c. so that a *Contradiction* shocks us in the very first Principles of Revelation itself.

It is a Maxim of the Civil Law, *Pejus est male credere quam nullo modo credere*; it is worse to believe amiss or erroneously, than not to believe at all:

In a Word, Faith in Reveal'd Religion is Faith in a Rhapsody of Manuscripts and Hear-says *coram non iudice*; But that to be *God-like*, is to be *Godly*, is the only Religion and Divine Worship, that ever truly was, is, or can be, in the World.

The Sum is, that positive Reveal'd Religion is believ'd to be a Matter of Fact, whereas there is not one known competent Witness of it, and such as are thought to be something known, are of no obligatory Credit, either as to Knowledge, Judgment, or Honesty: That its only Criterion from God must be Self-evidence; but on the contrary, it is, every way, a Contradiction, an Impossibility, a Non-entity, what never was, is, nor can be,

F I N I S

THE
T I T L E
O F

Ecclesiastical Estates, &c. Invalidated.

C H A P. I.

ALL the Right which the Bishops and rich Clergy have to their Estates, Perquisites, and Authority, is built on the Principles of the *Canon-Law*;

Which are directly contrary to the Principles of the *Common-Law* of *this Realm*, and of *Mankind*:

That is, of *Truth*, *Natural Justice*, *Equity*, *Moral Virtue*, *Universal Reason*, *Humanity*, and whatever is *really Sacred*, and *properly Divine* or *Religious*.

Even contrary to *that very revealed Religion* which is pretended to be the Support of them; for the *Hierarchy* as it stands, with *Arch-Bishops*, *Bishops*, *Priests*, *Deacons*, *Spiritual Courts*, &c. is so far from being found in the *Scripture*, either expressly, or by any *Rational Inference*, that it is *contrary to the Scripture*.

Neither *Christ*, nor *his Apostles* appointed it; they took away that Frame of *Judaism* and *Paganism*, which authorised *High-Priests*, *Priests*, and *Levites*, and the whole external Form of that Religious Government.

A

Christ,

Christ, who is, or ought to be regarded as the *One Law-giver of his Church*, the *One King, Priest, Prophet, and Spiritually authoriz'd Teacher or Minister, permanently established*; the *One High-Priest of the Christian Profession*, of the Order of *Melchizedeck*, who had NO DEPUTY, the ONE BISHOP OF SOULS, *the Author and FINISHER of the Christian Faith*, who, therefore left none to pretend to *finish or perfect* what he made *Compleat* himself, and to add to, or change his single *indivisible Hierarchy*,

He took away the *National Church of the Jews*, did not enact *any other* in its stead; did not appoint any *Church-Representative, Council, Synod or Convocation*, nor any *Church-Legislative*, to make Laws for his *peculiar Subjects*.

He did not enact any *settled Sees, or Benefices, or external Assemblies, and Schemes of Publick Worship, or Ecclesiastical Judicature*, they are of a Temporal and Civil Erection, partly suited to the Model of the *secular Empire of Rome, by Constantine, Justinian, &c.* on Reasons of *Policy then* and in that Dominion; and by *King John here*, after he had betray'd his People by resigning his Crown to the *Legate* of a Bishop, (of no *Divine Legation*) and the true Characters of THEM are *very wicked*, in the most Authentick History, some written by Ecclesiasticks themselves.

Even the *King's Supremacy* here is a *Supremacy in Parliament*, part of the *public Trust* reposed in him by the Original Compact of his People, a Civil Right, though called *Spiritual* in the Usage of Speech, to distinguish its *supposed Objects*.

Even that Jurisdiction, which was usurped here by the Bishop of Rome, (and all Bishops would be like him) is supposed to be restored to the Crown by several Statutes, said to be mentioned with this restrictive Phrase, or some like it: ——— 'to be

' that Power which was, or OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN,
' in

‘ in that Bishop.’ i. e. If HE had no true Authority, none such could be had or exercised by the Crown itself, as RESTORED from HIM to the Crown; much less by any Bishop, Priest, Ecclesiastical Officer, or Spiritual Jurisdiction.

These Words, OUGHT TO HAVE, refer us to the Truth and Justice of the Pretension; as to which, the Canon-Law itself is built on Forgery, the Decrees and Decretals were forged; Luther burnt the Canon Law, and the Bishop’s Instruments of his Authority; the Reformation set out on that Foot; the retaining and reviving the Canon-Law is Popery still, repugnant to our Constitution, as such; an Inquisition is an express Branch of that Canon-Law, by which a Protestant may guess at the whole: And Dr. Burnet, late Bishop of Sarum, in a familiar Discourse, with the learned, ingenious, and worthy William Bobun, Esq; Barrister at Law, freely declared, ‘ That the Canon-Law, and the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction were originally from Hell, and thither it ought to be sent again,—and that a greater than he, even an Archbishop (naming GRINDAL) was also of that Opinion.’

And the Historian, Matthew Paris, complain’d; Heu, heu! Hæc Sulphureo fonte Ecclesiasticorum exurgunt; Alas, alas! These Things arise from the sulphureous HELL-FIRE Spring of the ECCLESIASTICKS! p. 542. Col. 2.

Nor can it be infer’d, that what the Bishops pretend their Right is now, was antiently so; for even Bishop Kennet in his Case of Improvements and Augmentation of Vicarages, speaking of the Tythes and Offerings that were an ORIGINAL FUND, (which may suggest it was a STOCK-JOB, a BUBBLE, at first) for the Bishops and Clergy, and telling us, that as to the Institution of Parishes, and the Endowment of Parochial Churches, for the first six or seven Centuries, the Parochia, or Parish was the

Diocese or Episcopal District, insinuates, that every Parish Priest is as good as a Bishop, and a *Parish* properly is a *Diocese*; a Bishop being an *Over-seer*, cannot *over-see* even some large Parishes, much less, a Modern *Diocese*; and Parish Priests are all of the Clergy that are of true Use, Necessity, or Service to the Civil Government.

As their Title is false, with respect to the Foundation of the Canon-Law, and to Antiquity, so in regard to what they claim on the Scripture-footing, it may be observed, that, even granting to Archbishop *Potter*, that his Book on Church-Government is true, (though any Man who reads, among others, the Rev. Mr. *Charles Owen's* Account of the Presbyterian Ordination, will find the Contrary,)

Yet it proves against him, and against them all; if they were from the Beginning *Governors*, they were POLITICIANS, CRAFTSMEN of *Ephesus*; by *Governing*, they *governed, ruled, directed*, what was to be admitted, read, and preached upon in Congregations; who *dar'd* withstand their *Governors*, or think, write, speak, preach, pray, hear, or publish TRUTH, under *such Politicians*? by which in Effect, they must be supposed to do the same, as if they MADE IT for *themselves* and their *Flocks* together, which is the Case of what the Church of *England*, against *The Reason* of her own Articles, calls, *Canonical Scripture*, the *Rule of Faith and Manners*, it must, in Course, be what these *Governors over-ruled* from time to time; and therefore, *at the Bottom*, MADE for the People: it was perfectly equivalent.

And what I mean by the *Reason* of the *Articles*, is, that the Church declares those Books to be Canonical Scripture, concerning which, there had been *no Doubt in the Church*; by which Criterion, she may be thought to have no Canonical Scripture at all, but to put herself on a Level with Deists and Infidels,

dels, and ought not to be so hard upon them; for there is not one Book, but what has been doubted of in the Church, from *Genesis* to the *Revelations*.

The Ground of the Bishop's, &c. Rights to their Estates and Authority being thus shewn to be false, as to the *Canon-Law* and the *Scripture*, let us proceed to consider what those Estates were, and are, and what are the Properties and Consequences that attend them;

It is plain by *Peter's* striking dead *Ananias* and *Saphira* in the Book of *Acts*, and by *Paul's* exhorting the People to *lay by and Collect* for the *Saints*, and by his claiming *Temporal Things* for *Spiritual Things*, that they made use of their System as one Way to get Money, not only by *Free-Gift*, but by *Claim of Right*: And that they aspired from the first, to get the *Estates, Lands, &c.* of their Converts into their own *Disposal*; though *they*, in person, would not *serve Tables*, would not exercise a secular Employment, Power or Capacity, which Bishops do, by sitting in the House of Lords, being Justices of the Peace, Governors of Hospitals, and of *Queen Anne's* Bounty; Treasurers of Societies, Directors of Charities, Managers of Elections and Votes, and of political Interests, and a thousand other Cases, in which they oppose the Characters of the Apostles, from whom they derive their Commission, and are more *Lay-men*, than *Spiritual Men*, against their own Principles.

Nay, by *these spiritual Principles* they have no Church, for *they* make a Church a *Spiritual Body*, whereas it is a *Lay Society*, of which a *King and Parliament, Lay-Trustees* of the People, are avowedly the Head: Where then is their Distinction, for they are by Law established, by Lay Acts of Parliament, and Powers given them by the Laity?

But their Claim to *Christian's Estates* subsisting thus on *Peter* and *Paul*, from the first, may shew,
their

their Affair was *interested*, a good *Work*, or good *Jobb*, to make a *Party*, and get *Money* and *Influence*, so that the Author of the *Trial of the Witnesses* has brought his *Hogs* to as fair a *Market*, as my Lord *Split-devil*, for *interested Witnesses of the Resurrection, of Revealed Religion*, and of the whole *Business*, would be, to a *Jury*, by the *Common-Law*, no good *Evidence*.

Nay, even by their own *Canon-Law* they are to be *Witnesses*, *Omni exceptione majores*, beyond all *Exception*, which none of them are; so that the *Matter* tumbles both *Ways*, and their Lordships *Estates in Law* have *no Evidence* to make good the *Title*.

I might add, that most of the Original *Witnesses* they can bring, are *Popish Witnesses*, and testify as such against them: The *Fathers* are mostly *Popish Saints*, and for *Popery*; therefore a *Protestant Court* and *Ministry* ought to look about them in time, and take care, that *Gentlemen*, who appear so much at *Court*, that many think, they seem to forget there are any *Souls* in *Dioceses* worth the *Cure*, and who bustle so much in the *Voting* and *Meddling* for them, do not, at *Bottom*, undermine and destroy the *Protestant Succession*, and the very *Interest* and *Cause* of *Protestancy*; especially, as they subvert the first and true *Lutheran Principle* of a *Protestant Reformation*.

Dr. Davenant has wrote on *Resumptions of Crown-Lands, Rents, Gifts, and Revenues*, as very necessary: His *Doctrine* is at least as just, if not much more so, if applied to the *Expediency* and *Necessity* of the *Resumptions of Bishops Estates* to the right *Owners*, or, if these *Owners* please, to pay our *Debts* and *Taxes*, and ease the *Current Service* of the *Year*; nor could they complain of this as putting the *Church* in *Danger*, for they glibly took them from the *Papists*, and what is *Sauce* for a *Goose* is *Sauce* for a *Gander*.

Englishmen,

Englishmen, by their Principles and Genius of Liberty, are more jealous, and reasonably so, of their Rights, than other Nations.

Let them consider, that the Estates of Bishops and Ecclesiasticks, are *unalienable*, are in *Mortmain*, cannot be sold or *parted with*, but by express Act of Parliament.

So that they cannot be essentially diminished.

But they are *always increasing*, not only by the Bounty of Queen *Anne*, but by an immense Liberty of *Purchasing*, and even in Possessing in *Mortmain* by the *King's Licence* (which was not *reserved* by *Magna-Charta*, and is an odd Phænomenon under our Saviours *from Popery*) with whom they are commonly very assiduous, and *whom*, or his Ministers, they may be capable of soliciting and biasing to their Purpose, in Consideration of their seeming Activity for Political and Parliamentary Interests: Wherein upon the whole, they may do more Harm than Good.

The last Statute relating to *Mortmain-Possessions*, of the ninth of his present Majesty, reserves to the Heads of Colleges an unlimited Power to purchase what Advowsons they please, even when it limits the Colleges as to the Number of those Purchases: And it is certain, that the Heads of Houses may be employed by the Colleges to purchase Advowsons for their Benefit, and to enrich the University-Wealth in general.

So that a College, which by that Act can only purchase a Number of Livings equal to that of one Moiety of the Fellows, may yet desire its Head to Purchase, and pension the Fellows upon the Living, or present it to them or to whom he pleases; by which that Act may be rendered ineffectual to the End for which it was obtained, be defeated, and in this Respect made no Law at all.

All

All who know any Thing of College-Management, know, that the *Arcana* or *Secrets* of the College are not to be divulged by the Master, or Fellows, or any concerned in them; that they are laid under a particular Obligation, I think, *an Oath*, on that Head, that the Purser or Treasurer of a College is said to be under more strict Engagements of this kind, than even the Senior Fellows; and therefore the Heads of Houses may be very secure in Purchasing, if they can, and will, (as what *will* they not do, if they *can*?) *all the Livings and Estates too, in the Kingdom*, notwithstanding the Restraint of the last *Mortmain-Act* on the Colleges.

This was a Master-stroke of Episcopal Address, in the Modelling of that Act: The King may License, and the Heads may Purchase, all Estates and Livings in *Mortmain*, respectively; it ought to make every Person, even a Court and Administration, suspicious, who deals with them; when they conjecture they are intended to be laid under a Disadvantage, they will contrive a Loop-hole, and turn it to an Advantage.

So that the most crafty Politicians are often mere Asses to these Sanctimonious Jockeys; it is by *this Cunning*, that their Religion is what they please to make it, whenever they are disposed to lay their subtle Heads together, in a hearty manner, to counterplot the Laity; the most refined and most dangerous Hypocrisy is that of some Prelates and Ecclesiasticks, from their *Italian Machiavelists*; God, *Christ*, Heaven, Hell, the Church, the Soul, Salvation, are Terms of Importance and Weight, and few would imagine, a Cloven-Foot may be under the Robe.

The Estates and Emoluments belonging to this Charitable Corporation, consist in *Archbishopricks*, *Bishopricks*, and *their Officers*, temporal and spiritual, who depend upon them for Support, their Suffragans,

Suffragans, Vicars-general, Guardians of Spiritualities, Deans, Arch-deacons, Registers, Deputy-registers, Advocates, Apparitors.

All who are of their *Posse* and Militia, and naturally influenced by them, or entrusted with them, Schools, Colleges, Charities, Societies of Christian Knowledge, and Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and Reformation of Manners, Hospitals, Donations, Benefactions, and Legacies for pious and charitable Uses, Monies to Lectures, Sermons, and various Endowments and Trusts.

Benefices, Rectories, Vicarages, Chapelries, Curacies, Donatives, Advantages from Foreign Plantations, Recommendations to and Sale of Preferments, private Bargains, Patronages, Procurations, Synodals, Tenths, Presentations, Institutions, Inductions, Dispensations, Visitations, Oblations, Obventions, Tythes, Mortuaries, Easter-Dues, Stipends, Impropriations, Manors, Lands, Consecrations, Leases, Fines, Augmentations by private or publick Benefactors, Presents, Subscriptions, Contributions.

Offertories, Pluralities, Commendams, Surplice-Fees, Marriages, Christenings, Burials, other Perquisites and Fees, Licenses, Qualifications for Chaplainships, Glebes, Gifts, and Purchases in Mortmain, Tenements, Rents, and other Hereditaments, Temporalities, Pensions, Advowsons, Rights of Presentation by Reason of Recusancy, Interest with Patrons and Ministers of State to prefer or non-prefer others, Resignations and Exchanges, Political and other Management and Solicitation.

Privileges and Immunities, Dispensations, Commutations, Ordinations, Dignities, Ornaments and Furniture of Churches and Chapels, Briefs, Select Vestries, the whole Rent-charge of the Church lying on the People, Gifts to Superstitious Uses.

Ex-

Exactions and Extortions of Spiritual Courts, Excommunications, Corruptions and Abuses of Parish-Officers and others, Habits of Ministers Officiating, Bells, Organs, Altar-Pieces, Expence and Support of the new Churches, Taxes for these Purposes, as on Sea-Coal, &c. Probate of Wills, and Administration, Forfeitures on absenting from Church.

Civil Disabilities and Burdens, Nepotism and Provision for their Families in the Church before others of greater Merit and Service, Salaries, Non-Residence, Union and Division of Churches, Clergy excused in Subsidy-Acts of the Laity, Popery kept in other Hands and Names, Patents.

Surrogates, Proctors, Inhibitions, Sequestrations, Licences to Physicians, Surgeons and Midwives, to Schools and School-masters, Sine-Cures, Cathedrals, Prebends, Cardinalships, Church-Rates and Assessments, Citations, Exhibits, Judgments of Heresy, Interdicts, and ten thousand other Ways, Persons and Things, turning the Penny and making up the *ONUS ECCLESIAE*, *the Prophet's Burden*, *quantum profuit Fabula*.—What a *RUN* has it had! what a long Tail our Cat has got!

The subordinate or subdivided Articles, under each of these, will branch out into an infinite Variety, and are not to be enumerated.

The Persons, who are in Possession of this fine Inventory, compose a very formidable *Corps*, a huge standing Army of the Church; all ready to join for and against any Person or Affair, as the Commanding-Officers, called Church-Governours or Ecclesiastical Balthaws, &c. from Time to Time *direct* and *order* them. —*Orders* is a Military Term, for every one to obey the Word of Command, and Ecclesiastical and Martial Law are equally absolute, only the former the more severe and terrible.

The Number of this *Army*, or Church-Militant must be, at least, three Parts of the Island, so that computing

computing the People at ten Millions, by Supposition, seven Millions and an half are under the Command of the *First Minister of the Church*, for the Time being.

And what they could effect is incredible; they have owned themselves, that *sometimes Pulpits are set on Work by their private Direction, and that being avowed to be true*, is a notorious incontestable Key to the Cabinet; implies, that the whole *Machine of Power* is and may be set on work by Direction, for any Purpose whatever; for any new Croisade or Expedition.

As, to join to enslave and beggar the *People*, on occasion, to obstruct and ruin the Preferment, Prospect, Reputation, Interest of any Clergyman whom they are *ordered* not to like, or any Lay-man or Family; any Person whatever, of either Sex, of all Conditions, from the highest to the lowest.

Innumerable Instances of the dreadful Execution of which Power occur in all History antient and modern, domestick and foreign.

Nor can it be alledged, that Popery does not prevail here, and therefore this Power is not to be feared; for a Church-Spirit is a Spirit of Popery, and the Author of the *Codex* (whose Temper and Practices are well known and said to be dearly experienced by some Gentlemen, even of the Holy Order itself,) has professedly put the Protestant Church of *England* on a Popish Footing, on the Canon Law, the Constitutions of *Otho* and *Othobon* the Pope's Legates, and those of Popish Archbishops and Synods.

Though himself implies, in his Preface, they are contrary to the Common-Law: This plainly indicates, what they would be at, at the same time that it directly proves, *the Nullity of their Title* to their Estates and Authorities, and points out the Means of recovering them to their just and legal Proprietors.

But there are also some *original Nullities* of this pretended Right to their Estates, which shall be only hinted at present. As,

That the modern *Church Worship* is a *Christian Continuation* or Imitation of the *Synagogue-Worship* of the *Jews*, which was and is, contrary even to the *Law of Moses*, *Moses* having forbidden all *Judaical Worship*, but what is provided for in his *Law*, and all that is there provided for, is the *Tabernacle-Worship*, continued in the *Temple*, perhaps, and no other.

2. These Estates are owned to be a kind of *Deodands*, *Gifts to God*, and to the *Church*, which is the whole Community of *Christians*, not to *Bishops* or *Dignitaries*, to engross and monopolize them to themselves: And the *Nation* is properly, (except the particular Antient Owners put in their Claim,) the *National Church*, whose Right they are; which is confirmed,

3. Because they were at first given, as *Alms*, to the *Poor and the Ministers together*, not to the *Ministers*, *Bishops*, &c. apart from the *Poor*.

This was instead of *Tithes*, which were for *Levites and Poor together*, so that *Tithes* now are monstrous: Our Law declares the Case by *Frank-Almoigne*, or *Free-Alms*: This subjects the Church-Estates to the Reason of Enquiries into *Charitable Uses*, (as well as *Superstitious Uses*,) and *Uses* and *Trusts* being *Correlates*, the *Trust* and *Execution* of it, in this Matter, well examined, will discharge and rectify these Estates: Offertories had their Rise from these *Alms*, and the Sacrament was, as ceremonially performed, not from the Gospel, but *from and for* the *Offerings*: This is the Key of the *Externals* of Christianity. And if the *Apostles*, &c. put themselves in among the *Poor* to be taken care of, Gospel and Charity-Sermon was much the same.

Other Nullities may be mentioned hereafter.

As

As to Encouragement of Learning, it is rather the Encouragement of Ignorance; at first, the Bishops, &c. were chiefly illiterate, and tho' some are, or have been learned, their Cause may be that of Barbarism, they are sometimes jealous of a good Scholar, and seek to ruin him. *Vide Bishop Hare's Difficulties, &c.*

Our main Point, at present, is to investigate the increasing Value of these Estates, and its fatal Tendency, besides the shocking Inconsistency of augmenting the Income, if the *Faith decreases in Fact*, as well as by Mr. *Locke's* Calculation of the *Degrees of Credibility* decreasing in proportion to the *Decrease of the Original Evidence*.

As the Copy of a Copy diminishes the Evidence of an Original; therefore Mr. *Lardner*, a Dissenting Teacher, of very good Learning and Zeal, is content with the humble Stile of the *Credibility of the Gospel-History*, in his late numerous Volumes on that Subject; he does not insist on the *Credendum*, that People are bound to believe, but the *Credibile*, that it may be believed, if you please, and puts it on a Parity with the History of *London-Bridge*, or the Battle of *Malplaquet*. *Euge, bone!*

The *Title* being so vain, corrupt and wicked, the *Power* swelling by these Estates so pernicious and dreadful, let us consider what Method can be taken to investigate the particular and total Value of them.

And *here*, the *Revealers of Religion* affect to make their *Christianity* very *mysterious*; what they mean by *revealed Religion*, is *concealed Religion*, *revealed Religion to and by them* to others; the Grist is to be ground and the Toll taken at their Mill, as if they were a Trading Company to Heaven, and you must buy in their Stock, trust the Directors and Supercargoës, who can make *South-Sea* a
Thousand,

Thousand, in some *New Jerusalem*, by way of *Reversion*.

And happy is he that can turn Moon-shine into Sun-shine, Silver to Gold, by the Help of the *Money-Changers*, or *Holy Bankers*, the *Mount of Piety Men*, where all is transfigured.

So that the true Value of these Estates cannot be known without the utmost Difficulty.

If a Correspondence was every where established, so that, by the *Excisemen* and *Supervisors*, (Bishops themselves are *Supervisors*, *Overseers*) an Account of the Livings, the gross and neat Produce, on an Average, *Communibus Annis*, could be obtained.

Or, by the *Quakers* and known *Free-Thinkers*, in each Neighbourhood, or by those who have been sued, or used ill, by the Bishops and Clergy; by Dissenters from them, or such as they call Hereticks or Schismaticks, who would be inclined to make Enquiry and Discoveries; by such Members of Parliament or Voters, who are not in the respective Interest of this or that Bishop or *Ecclesiastick*; or by any Gentleman who does not relish their Principles and their System, the Number of which increases; or by *Roman Catholics*, from whom they took their Sees, Benefices, Perquisites, and Revenues.

Or, if a Society or Club was to meet on this avowed Footing, each Person to take his Division, Bishoprick or County, and, by his Correspondents, know the Valuation.

Or if *Curates* and *Affistants*, who are paid too fordidly, could be engaged for some Consideration, to send up the Account to Town, in order to get their Stipends to be increased, as they ought to expect.

Since it is highly scandalous there should be an *Augmentation-Office* for Bishops and Beneficed Clergy, and none for those whom they may use like

Dray-

Dray-Horfes, to go through all their Drudgery, and perform their most useful and necessary Business : So that it is the Interest of the whole Body of the Curates to be against them, and assist in communicating the Value of such Possessions, was it only to do Right to themselves ; and the Curates have no effectual Method left, but to unite one and all for this purpose.

As much Light may be had by proper Persons, so likewise, from certain Places, Offices, Occasions, Books printed and Manuscripts, Law-suits on Record, or other Records, Rentals, Terriers, Inventories, Accounts of Sequestrations, Dilapidations, Reports of Tenants, Books of Tythes and Easter-Offerings, *Tax-Assessments*, Registers of Dioceses, and Archdeaconries, First-Fruits Office, the Office of the Secretaries of the Presentations, Notitias of the Monasteries, *Eston's Thesaurus*, *Willis on Cathedrals*, &c. Acts of Parliament, Accounts of Patrons, and of Lords or Gentlemens Stewards, of Courts-Leet and Baron, or Hundred-Courts, the Dispensations in Chancery, which must be attended with a Certificate of the Value of the Livings ; Mr. *Bobun's* Brief View of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction ; *Newcourt's Repertorium* ; *Le Neve's Fasti* ; *Adam's Index Villaris*, *Liber Valorum* ; *Dugdale*, *Nicholson*, *Camden*, *Antiquities of England*, &c.

A Library on this Subject might be collected, and Lectures founded of more Use than *Boyle's*, *Lady Moyer's*, and a thousand Endowments and Institutions at present on foot.

Fleetwood's Chronicon Pretiosum, and all Tables and Histories of our Coin will be useful to compare the antient and present Worth of our Bishopricks and Dignities.

It must here be presumed, that *Eston* would have given us the Value of Benefices, as well as the First-Fruits, Tenths, and Patrons.

And that *Groome*, on the Benefactions of the Clergy, might have entered into it.



CH A P. II.

BUT it is not the Design of the Gentlemen on this Side of the Question to produce the *Quantum* of what they have or do possess, but to obtain more and grasp at all.

A Calculation of the *Profits* made and received by them since *Christ's* Time, or that of *Constantine*, parallel'd with the solid Advantages which the Donors have not met with in Return, and the Losses and Sufferings that have been sustained, on this Score, would be a most entertaining Theme.

It is notorious, that it is a Scheme to engross all Property and Power, an universal Monarchy, or rather an universal Tyranny over Men, under the Mask of Religion.

What else can be the Meaning of a *Writer* yet *unknown*, though received as *Divine*, putting those Words into the Mouth of *Christ* himself,—*All Power is given to me?*—Did *Christ* speak those Words, or commission that *Writer* to write them for him? How is that proved?

But it was convenient to the *Church* or *Party*, for whose Interest those Words, and that Piece was written, to make him say them;—for they are *Party-Writings*. *Gospel* means properly the *Word of God spoken*; *Evangelium*, *Good News told, preach'd by Word of Mouth*.—There is no Commission to *write it*.—But *that* was necessary to carry on a Scheme, which *Christ* himself did not authorize;

for elsewhere he declared against *Earthly Power*, much more against *all Power on Earth*.

That it is a Scheme to devour *all Property* also, is self-evident from those other Words put into the Mouth of *Christ*, by one of those unknown Writers,—*Go and teach all Nations*,—or *disciple all Nations*,—make them as much Subjects to you as Disciples, or Scholars, are to their School-Masters, to *come with a Rod*, to represent which, an *Apparitor* carries a *white Rod*, when he attends one *doing Penance*, &c.

But there is something farther in those Words, than is commonly thought of:—*Go and teach all Nations*.—

That seems a *Warrant* to go upon every Man's Ground, and preach upon it; which was a *Disseising* the *lawful Owner*, whether he would or not,—and was a License to make an *Entry* on every Person's Land, Tenement, or Property.

Our Common Law would call it a *Trespass* at least: For if any Man tells me, though in the Name of God, that he will preach or teach on my Premises, there lies an Action: So that such Bishops as claim an unlimited Succession from the Apostles, subverting by this the *Common Law*, may be liable to the same *Impeachment* or *Indictment* with Cardinal *Woolsey*, on the same Account; as the learned Lawyer *Francis White* has observed in his Book, entitled, For the sacred Law of the Land.

I need say no more, to shew the RIGHT and KEY TO A REMEDY in *taking away such Estates*, than that they are held contrary to Common Law, on their own most sacred Principles: But *White* makes the *Law of the Land* more sacred; and all Men of Sense and Property will concur with him.

And this proves the Invalidity of that Judgment pronounced by an eminent Justice of a Court, otherwise of great Merit and Abilities, that Christianity

indefinitely is part of the Constitution ; for if the Principles and Claims of it are repugnant to those of Common Law, it is repugnant to the Constitution, and never was nor possibly can be part of it: Nay, if a Statute be contrary to the Principles and Reason of the Common Law, it is Null *ipso facto*, much more a Canon, or Church-Rule.

So that the puissant and mighty Lord *Codex* and the rest of his noble Band of Subscribers and Adherents, may put up their Pipes, and give them to the Organist for the next Rehearsal at St. *Pauls*.

But they shall not have the Advantage to prosecute us fairly for all this, on the Statute of the 10th of *William and Mary*, against such as deny the Inspiration and divine Authority of the holy Scriptures ; for we allow *that Inspiration and Authority* to them and all holy Scriptures, as soon as they are proved, and on the Footing, that what is good in all Writings, and all Men and Things, is by divine Inspiration and Authority ; the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth Men Understanding, and his Spirit is in all his Works.

We hope a Court of Justice will produce those holy Scriptures on RECORD, which God authorised and inspired, such as the Church tells us were never doubted : and are from God, not Man, on the Grounds and Evidence of Common Law ; otherwise I do not see, how a Man can offend that Act.

If any Person retracts *on such Light*, what he has said, that Statute cannot take hold on him.

Nor shall they attack us for Blasphemy ; for Bishops are not God Almighty ; *God and Christ* themselves are out of the Question, when we speak of *Men* pretending to *write* what they said and were ; but Bishops should have a care, *they* are not guilty of *Blasphemy*, if *they* hold or describe God to be, what he cannot be, an irrational or immoral Being ; avowing *Breach of Promise*, Numb. xiv. 34. — and De-

ceit, *Jer. xx. 7. O Lord, thou hast deceived me*—and in many other Places.

For *Blasphemy* is speaking dishonourably of God, what is against his Attributes, and therefore *defaming* or *Blaspheming him*: it is,

1. Denying him some Attribute, that is suitable to his Nature; as, that he is *All-sufficient* to *Man's* Acceptance in his Sight. Or,

2. When we ascribe something to him, that is contrary to his Nature; as, in those, who make God Arbitrary, doing all by *Will*, right or wrong, like *Satan*: Or,

3. When Men attribute to the Creature, what is only proper to God, as, *Divinity* to a *Humane Religion or Revelation*:—Of these correct Ideas of Blasphemy let others beware.

The Cry is, that the *Rationale* of their Affair, the Truth and Justice of it, the Merits of the Cause are against them.

They themselves, by their Silence, or ridiculous Arguments against the *Deists*, give up the Contest; they put it chiefly on the *Law*, on *Property*, and the Necessity of the Continuance of their Estates to the Order, Peace, and Safety of *the Kingdom*, (*not of Society* in general, which may subsist, and better, without *them*;) So that they do not pretend to be good Reasoners in their own Defence, so much as good Lawyers, and Politicians.

If therefore the *Law* and *Property*, if the *Interest of the Court*, and of the *Kingdom*, be against them, and its *Safety* too, all is over.

As to the *Law*, it has been already proved to be their Enemy; and may be farther evinced to be the same, in many other Instances.

As to *Property*, their's is kept from the right Owners; it is the Interest of those Owners to reclaim it.

The *Property* of others is not involved in, or affected by, theirs: It is of a different Nature: Sub-

sists on *Right*, and on the Principles of *Law*: *Inheritance*, *Purchase*, *Conveyance*, *Demise*, and *Tenure*, or *Custom*, *strictly lawful*.

It is a Rule, if the *Suggestion* on which a *Patent* or a *Privilege* be obtained, be *false*, or if it be not, as urged or pleaded, true, the Grant is void and may be superfeded:

In effect, *Bishops* may be said, at this Day, to be made by *Patent*, as they clearly were, under King *Edward VI.* the *Conge d' eslire* is a Kind of *Patent* issued out of the Court of *Chancery*; the King's *Mandate* for a *Bishop's Consecration* participates the Nature of a *Patent*, as do the other Instruments for his *Election*, *Restitution of the Temporalities*, &c.

When the *Conge d' eslire* is dispatched, the King's Letters missive, naming the Person, are sent with it: So that the Dean and Chapter do not really elect, or if they do, it is a *Præmunire*.

The Statutes say, a Bishop is made by Authority of *Parliament*, and King *Edward VI.* and Queen *Elizabeth* seiz'd their *Temporalities*; *Bishopricks* have been pulled down and set up at Pleasure: Surely, if *Property* and the *Safety* of the Kingdom were not affected, by demolishing the Bishop of *Rome* here, by abrogating the *Popish Bishops*, *Clergy* and *Religious Houses*, when it was even thought contrary to *Magna Charta*, when the Church of *England* was more powerful than now, and the State of Affairs more dubious, they cannot be shaken by a like Instance again.

Some say, they are as much despised and hated now, as they were at that Time; that much of their Religion is a Fallacy; and that there may be a Right to demand *Costs* and *Damages*, ever since the Time of *Christ*, and his *Apostles*, on the Company pretending to succeed him, and *Pains* and *Penalties* for the same: And also on Account of a certain *WILL* or *Testament*, to which they have administered:

minister'd: So that a JURY, so unluckily appeal'd to, in a *Trial of Witnesses*, for Evidence of the *Resurrection*, (which would hold as to every other Article, and even in *Doctor's Commons*) must, in that Case, unhorse them all.

As to the *Interest of the Court*, the Court can soon make six and twenty Lay-Lords as good as Bishops; who might, if occasion required, possess their Dioceses, and their Influence.

King Henry appointed the Lord Cromwell, a Lay-Lord, to be his Visiter to the Convocation, and sit among them: The King, the chief Bishop, Overseer, and Ordinary of the Nation, is a Lay-man; and no farther a *Parson*, *Persona mixta cum sacerdote*, than entrusted with Religion, subservient to Civil Policy and Necessity.

A Ministry does not esteem them the more for their Ductility: In truth they destroy their own Reputation and Weight, as Bishops, while they so zealously promote worldly Interest.

At last, if a Cry against them should grow formidable, and Protection may not be commodious, a Court, which is politic, would give them up, and *Sacrifice the Sacrificers*.

It might sometime be for the Purpose of a Court to seize their Temporalities by Act of Parliament, as some Princes have attempted, and others may desire.

Custom may not avail them then: The *Custom* of the *Common Law* is prior to, and supercedes the *Custom* of the *Ecclesiastical Law*, for *prior obligatio supersedet posteriori*, a prior Obligation supercedes one that is posterior or subsequent; the Law of Nature and Reason takes place of all positive Laws, and governs them: No Custom is such, if against Reason, Truth and Right.

Whatever was *false*, or unjust, at first, is of no Force in Law, notwithstanding any *Usage*, of how long continuance soever. There

There were *Temporal Judicatures* in Britain, before *Christianity* was imported here, and the Usage and Practice of those Judicatures, those Courts of Justice, were the Law of those Courts, &c. *part of the Law of the Land*: To which if the Usages of Episcopacy were repugnant, they were void, *ab initio*.

What Man of Common Sense and Common Honesty, (which Judges and Juries of Common Law are supposed to be,) must agree to be irrational, will, notwithstanding any Custom or Length of Time soever, appear to have no Foundation in Law, if it has none in Reason.

Coke, on Littleton, Sect. 209. Fol. 140. a. lays, it down as a Maxim of the Common Law, that
 ‘ All Customs and Prescriptions, which be against Reason, are void.

3d. Salkeld 112. Title, CUSTOMS, Sect. 5. says,
 ‘ Every Custom ought to have a reasonable Commencement, for no Custom can make that good, which was not so, *ab initio*.

And Sect. 7.
 ‘ A Custom is not unreasonable, for being injurious to private Persons or Interests, [to Bishops for Instance,] so as it tends to the general Advantage: [*i. e.* first of Mankind, then of Nations, and of that Nation, State, and Temporal Law, where it prevails.]

And Sect. 8.
 ‘ Where a Custom is injurious to the Public, and only for the Benefit of some Individual, [as a Company of Ecclesiastics, &c. which in respect to a Nation or Mankind, is an Individual.] it is unreasonable; for the Original of such Custom was by Tort or Usurpation. [This may point out an Action against such Estates.]

In Sir John Davis's Reports of the Case of *Tamistry*, Fol. 32. It is said, ‘ The Commencement of Custom

- ‘ Custom must be on a reasonable Ground and Cause,
- ‘ for if it was unreasonable in the Original, no
- ‘ Usage or Continuance can make it good :

Quod ab initio non valuit, tractu temporis non convalescet ;

- ‘ A Custom, repugnant to the Law of Reason,
- ‘ which is above all positive Laws, and therefore
- ‘ above all positive Institutions of Religion, is void,
- ‘ *ab initio*, and no Prescription of Time can make
- ‘ it good.

The *Doctor and Student*, Chap. 2. Fol. 4. says,
 ‘ The LAW of REASON is never changeable by no
 ‘ DIVINITY of Place, no Time ; and therefore a-
 ‘ gainst this Law, Prescription, Statute, Custom,
 ‘ may not avail ; and if any be brought in against
 ‘ it, they be not Prescription, Statutes, or Customs,
 ‘ but Things void, and against Justice.

Littleton, Sect. 212. put a Case of Prescription being void, as being against Reason, — Concluding,
 ‘ So such Prescription, or any other Prescription, if
 ‘ it be against Reason, ought not to be allowed be-
 ‘ fore Judges :

Quia malus usus abolendus est : Because an evil Use or Usage is to be abolished.

The Note of *Coke* on those Words, is, ‘ Every
 ‘ Use is Evil, that is against Reason.

And in his same Commentary, on *Sect.* 80. Fol. 62. He says, ‘ It is an Incident inseparable every
 ‘ Custom must have, that it be consonant to Reason,
 ‘ how long soever it hath continued, if it be against
 ‘ Reason, it is of no Force in Law.’

And when he tells us, this is not to be understood of every unlearned Man’s Reason, but of Artificial or Legal Reason, warranted by Law : This may be right in all Cases, which depend on the *Law* and *Legal* Arguments ; but, when applied to Matters, which depend partly on the Law, and partly on Matters of Fact, the most learned Man cannot rea-
 son

son justly without some Knowledge of the Fact, as well as of the Law and Usage.

It is said, that, at Common Law, a Jury is to find the Fact, and the Judges to determine the Law; others tell us, the Jury is the Judge of the whole Question.

However of such Matters, as are in themselves absolutely unlawful and irrational, and of the natural and circumstantial Evidence of Facts, likewise, every honest and disinterested Man, endued with Reason, though unlearned, may be an equal Judge as the Learned.

It has been proved that the COMMENCEMENT of a *Custom* ought to be *Reasonable*; and in this Light, (without entering into other *Maxims* or *fundamental Principles of Law*, which may overthrow such *Claims*,) I shall only subjoin four Authorities from my Lord Coke and Sir John Davis, in his Reports, by which if the *Commencement* of their *Religion and Claims* here be examined, they will be found unwarrantable, and liable to be annulled and abolished.

1. That the Law respects the Order and Course of Nature. 1 *Inst.* 11. a. 92. a. 197. b.
2. That the Rights of Nature are immutable. 7. *Rep.* 12, 13.
3. That nothing which is contrary to Reason, is consonant to Law. 1. *Inst.* 56. b. 97. b.
4. That the Law of Reason is above all positive Laws. — *Davis's Rep. Fol.* 32. Case of *Tanistry*.

If therefore the Religion, Claims, and Estates of these Gentlemen be opposite to those Authorities, if the *Religion* at first preached here by Commission from a Bishop, and therefore their Rights to their Estates founded upon it, violate these Principles, as the Law of Reason is above all *positive Laws*, and therefore above all *positive Religion*, settled by *Statutes*,

tutes, Canons, and the like; if they change the immutable Rights of Nature, and be contrary to Reason, the *Custom* and *positive* Sanctions which support them are *void*.

When the Monk, *Augustin*, the first Metropolitan of *Canterbury*, preached *his Doctrine*, and introduced *his Claims* here, (it is the same Case, whether you suppose the former *British* Bishops, or those imagined in the Time of King *Lucius*, it makes no difference.)

They were built on *Facts*, *Rights*, and *Propositions*, which were, jointly and separately, true or false, rational or otherwise, proved or not, capable of Proof or not, according to the Order, Course, and Right of Nature and Reason, and the Principles of the *English Laws*, in Being: As to which, the following Pleas are submitted :

First, This Religion was avowed to be above *Reason* and *Nature*, *Supernatural*, therefore repugnant to that Maxim, that the *Law of Reason* is above *all positive Laws*, what was above *Reason* was not an Object of it, not cognizable, nor capable of Proof by *Reason*; therefore incapable of being received or established by *Law*, which is built on *Reason*.

Secondly, This Religion has been avowed to be *contrary to Reason* and *Nature*: It has been said, *Credo, quia est impossibile*; I believe, because it is impossible, which subverts all Certainty, and is *Frenzy*, *Madness*, on a Principle of *Conscience*: It professes also to be contrary to *Nature*, as in *Self-denial*, *Leaving all*, *Self-punishment*, *forsaking Relations*, *giving all to feed the Poor*, &c. It is not sufficient to say, that it is only against *Corrupt Nature*, if *Nature* never was *corrupt*, only actual Sinners were in certain Acts corrupt, which did not affect Nature

in general, and if Original Sin be false Doctrine, even according to the Bible itself : Nor is it a Reply, that a Future State is a Recompence, for *Evil* is not to be done that *Good* may come of it ; nothing can rectify what is in itself wrong : A future State was and might be known without Bishops, *they* have not proved *their Authority* to ensure it : Nor is the Future State, which is referred to in the Gospel, such a one, as *they* preach ; nor do they and others agree about that, or any Article of their Christianity.

Thirdly, That the Bishop's Commission from *Peter, Christ, and God*, was never shewn, nor is it extant in the World : Meer Tradition, Hearsay, pretended Inspiration, History, Custom, Presumption, Belief, are no Commissions or Proof of one : A Commission is an express unquestionable Delegation of the particular Powers therein mentioned, authentickly and undeniably given on Record, and duly witnessed, from Persons by Name to Persons by Name at precise Times and Places : No Bishop ever had such a Commission from *Christ* or *God*.

Fourthly, A *Foreign Authority* in Religion, whether alledg'd from *Egypt, Jerusalem, Rome, Gaul*, or whence you please, is repugnant to the Laws and Birth-right of *Britons*.

A Man is no more bound to admit it, than to drink *Tea*, instead of *Home-produce* ; nor to go out of his Country for *his Religion*, than for *his Breakfast* : God is All-sufficient to all Men in all Countries, Right Reason is *his Word*, his whole sufficiently promulg'd or revealed Law to all honest considerate People, every where.

Fifthly, Nor was there a Possibility of such Commission from *Scripture* or *Oral Tradition* ; — *Scriptures, Writings, Manuscripts* are the same, written
by

by Men ; alter'd, forg'd, interpolated, corrupted, diminished, augmented, translated, commented, preached or written upon, at Pleasure, by Party-views, or as Governors dictated : Some sunk, others trumplt up ; never uniform.

The Scripture-Revelation must lie in *all the Scriptures and Texts*, which cannot be come at, none can have all the Manuscripts, much less all *pro* and *con* : So that it is an *Impossibility*, therefore contrary to Reason, to find it :—And there are no *lawful Records* of it, no *qualified Witnesses* according to the Common Law.

Sixtly, History is no Proof that it is from God : There is not one true humane History, that can be proved such, in the World, much less a Divine History : Politicians never suffered *one* : It is uncertain also on other Grounds. So that was this *holy History as true* as any other, it would not be *true*, much less obligatory from God on the Conscience, since *Christ*, who came on Purpose for Revelation, never wrote nor promised Inspiration to any Writers at all ; and his, and the Apostles Discourses, were occasional, to those Persons, Times, and Places, not a perpetual Law to all Times and Places, of *God's Truth*, *God's whole Truth*, and nothing but *God's Truth*, without *Doubt*, for full Assurance of Faith, stedfast, unmovable, DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT AND POWER, TO BRITONS, which was the only Proof of the *Bishop's Commission*, entitling to *Law*.

Seventhly, King *Ethelbert*, to whom it was preached, ordered, and it was agreed, it should be without Force, Compulsion, Coaction, or Prejudice : Thus writes *Bede* himself, a Priest ; but it was with Compulsion avowedly, for the Bishops then claimed a *Penal Coercive Power in Religion* : A Power of Authority to oblige Men to the Obedience of Faith, to profess

Belief, to be of the Church, or *be damn'd*, be *condemned*, to what Punishment, what Rod they pleased.

Eighthly, they brought it in by *Prepossession*, *Imposition*, *implicite Faith*, *blind Custom*, *Ignorance*, not by free Rational Consent, to make it the voluntary unexceptionable Act of the Party in Law.

So that there was no proper Compact, Covenant, nor Agreement, as is presumed in the Civil Government, and as ought to be in all Society.

Infants, unknowing, unconsenting, (but by *Guarantees*, nor authoris'd even in Scripture,) were to be *rivett'd in*, get out as they could; the *Ignorant*, the *Credulous*, the *Superstitious*, in that dark Age, were *imposed on*: The Matter was not fairly and *legally deliberated* between the *King, People, and Bishops*.

A weak Woman Queen *Bertha* was first *practis'd on*, and ruled her Husband, and by him all:—No free, full, and fair *Consent, Compact, Law, or Constitution*.

Ninthly, It was brought as a DEED, a CHARTER, a CONVEYANCE, an INSTRUMENT OF LAW, a COVENANT, of the greatest Importance between GOD and BRITONS, transacted by COMMISSION FROM GOD: One material Flaw destroys a Law-Instrument: And in this suppos'd *are numberless*. Mr. *Emlyn* shewed a kind of Forgery in one Text, on—*These three are one*.—So in *History*, *Pliny's* Epistles have been always quoted for *Primitive Christianity*, and the tenth Book, containing that Proof, was *forged*; for it was not written by *Pliny*; as a great Churchman and Antiquary Mr. *Hearne*, evinces, in the *Oxford Edition of Pliny*.

And in Texts, innumerable Depravations, and in their Sense, Immoralities, Absurdities, and Inconsistencies may be detected, utterly subverting the Authority of a Commission, built upon it.

Tenthly,

Tenthly, The Dates of Time of their Religion, and the History of the Miracles and Prophecies, as Matters of Fact, are not certainly clear and evident, that the Thing *must come from God, and none else*; which is absolutely necessary to the *Divine Obligation* of it: There were *Miracles, Prophecies, Arch-Flamins and Flamins*, like *Arch-bishops and Bishops, Revelations, Inspirations, Oracles, Churches*, all the Apparatus of their Religion among the *Heathens*, and all their *good Doctrines*; Britons did not want this *imported Merchandise*.

Lastly, It brought in a Government *within*, and *contrary to*, the *Civil*; a Religion that has in great part, been declared *false* at the Reformation, and it cannot be shewn, that all is not on an equal Footing: One, that has not attained its End proposed by it: Men and Britons were to have been more *moral, rational, and happy* by it, they have been more wicked, foolish, and miserable, in it: And as *they* could not *transfer* to *Man* that Faith, Conscience, and Duty, which they ow'd to *God only*, they could not lawfully receive it *from Man*, as binding them *from God*.

Much more might be added; but all this being contrary to *such Custom*, as is warranted by *Law*, contrary to the Course and Order of Nature and Reason, which cannot be changed, and are above all *positive instituted Law*, and therefore above all pretended to be such, in Religion.—All this declares, that on the Maxims of Law, Lord Coke, Judge Littleton, Sir John Davis, Salkeld, &c. The Customs of the *Bishop's Religion, Claims, and Estates*, had not a REASONABLE COMMENCEMENT, are therefore *Nullities* and repugnant to the *State* and the *Constitution*.

And that the Religion of *Christ*, as a Teacher of *Right Reason*, is the *Legal Religion*, and the only *Lawful*

Lawful Construction, in which *Revealed Religion* can be supposed to be admitted in *Britain*, and received in the Intention of King and People fully informed. One Statute declaratory of this, and explaining all the positive Laws about Religion to be thus intended, according to the Common Law, (in Aid of which only, Statutes and Canons are made) would effectuate the Point as easily, as it was introduced, and far more for the publick Good, which the aforesaid System essentially contradicts, because it contradicts the Principles of the common Law.



C H A P. III.

FOR the Present, I shall dismiss *this great Point*, with some additional Observations on *Ecclesiastical Estates*, thus illegally founded.

Dr. *Ayliffe*, in *his Parergon*, has given us a Catalogue of the Religious Houses in *England*, dissolved by King *Henry VIII.* those discharged from Tythes in Virtue of their Orders, and the Mitred Abbots called to Parliament, and exempt from Episcopal Jurisdiction.

Colleges are a Sort of Monasteries, the Head and Fellows like the *Prior* or *Abbot and his Monks*: So are *Cathedrals*, Bishop and Prebendaries are like a *Mitred Abbot*, or *Father*, (*Abba*, *Father*, in *God*,) and the like.

The Cathedral was a *Convent* or *College* of *Bishops* and *Presbyters*, a *Monkery*: Even the *Essenes* and *Apostles* might be something like it, for a better Livelihood together.

Bishops may be ended as well as Mitred Abbots; *Cathedrals* are *Religious Houses*, and may be equally dissolved: All were as *Hospitals* are, each a *Maison de Dieu*, *Bethel*, a House of God, that is, dedicated

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to God, or, *the Public*, which has *the same Sense*: *Mitred Abbots* are not now in Parliament, *Bishops* are the like.

Many Monks were freed from Tythes; so may and ought the Laity to be: *Many* were exempt from Episcopal Jurisdiction, so ought *all* to be; the King is or should be exempt from it, as Trustee of the People, therefore the People originally are exempt, and there is no such Jurisdiction, but *from the People*, and *the Parliament*:

The Estates of those Monasteries in Dr. *Ayliffe* amount to great Sums, comparing the Value of Coin then with the present; and the richest were those of *Glastenbury* and *Westminster*; the Wealth of *Glastenbury* owing chiefly to a Lye of the *Thorn* and *Joseph* of *Arimathea*, the Counsellor of St. *Sepulchre*.

As *Benefices* were valued for the People: First-Fruits were first given to God, that is for the Public Good; so were Tenths: The People, the Original of Power, ought to have *Tenths* from the Bishops, &c.

Queen *Anne* left her Father, and gave away the Tenths or Tythe; our King may leave the *Fathers* and give the Tythes to all his Sons, Laity as well as Clergy.

In *Eaton's Thesaurus*, we find the Names of *Saints*, to whom *Rectories*, &c. were dedicated; *all Christians* were called *Saints* in the New Testament, so that they might be so meant for their *Benefit* and *Wealth*.

The Dedication-Saints are mostly Fabulous, no Foundation for a Claim of Estates.

The Proportion of the *Recompense* to the *Duty* is often used as an Argument; neither God nor *Christ* ever made it a *Duty* for a Bishop of *L*——to govern that Diocese, or for any Dean, Arch-deacon, Prebendary, or Rector to pray in this or that Church; they

they are all willing to make the Duty as small, and the Gain as considerable as they can.

Who hath required *this Duty* at their Hands? or given them the Recompence? The Labourer is worthy of his Hire, but he is not to hire himself: They have obtruded themselves to the Duty, and ought to pay themselves for the Recompence.

The rich Clergy ought to maintain the poor Laity: Or, properly speaking, all the Laity ought to be Clergy by Turns, and to officiate for one another: Any Lay-man might read Forms of Sermons, as the Clergy read Forms of Prayer.

The Poorer Clergy ought to be pensioned on the richer; they ought to do good, *especially* to those who are of the Household of Faith: which, I think, was a Doctor's Text, before the *Sons of the Clergy*, (but who they are, is uncertain,) and by that Rule, that Doctor ought to maintain Mr. *Keith*, or the Truth is not in him: For he that loveth not his Brother, whom he hath seen, (in low Circumstances, by his Prosecution, *Anglice*, Persecution of him,) how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? and whom no Canonical Barbarian ever will see.

There is a Method more useful to the Publick, (which is more than any Hierarchy ever was, or can be, all Things compared,) observed by the King of *Prussia* to make his Civil and Military Officers Bishops, Deans, Prebendaries, and Parsons, by vesting their Revenues in them: And it was a noble Scheme proposed, it is said, by one of our Ministers, in *Germany*, to *secularise* the Ecclesiastical Dignitaries there, for why should not they, as well as Books, (which they seldom read,) be adapted to the Age? They love the World, and the World would not be out of Love with them, for the Sake of their Income and Power.

Mr. *Elton*, of pious Memory, is an Author of great Merit among them, for his devout Recommendation

mendation of their Interest in his Book entitled, *The-saurus Rerum Ecclesiasticarum*, a Treasury of Church Affairs: A very emphatical Title: *Treasury* means that these Religionists aim at the *Pence*; the Clergy-man's *Vade mecum* is a *Pocket-Companion*.

And he makes *this Gain* the System of *Church-Affairs*, of *their Business*, of *all they have to do*: To be *enriched in all Things*; to live by *saving Faith*; alter the Words, a *future State*, to a *future Estate*, and it means a *Translation*, a *new Plurality*, a *better Living*, or a *Living to one who has none*: In which Sense, they deny a *future State* to some, and for their own Part, would rather chuse a *present Estate* than a *future State*.

He tells us, that, 'At the Reformation the Tythes, &c. might, more easily than at present, have been restored to those Uses, for which they were originally settled:' Yet this would unhinge our Protestant Bishops and Clergy, for the Popish Revenues were designed for Popish Uses, and according to this Hint of Mr. *Edon*, either Popery ought to accompany the Revenues, or they may as justly be taken away from the present as the Popish Bishops, if there be any difference:

These Revenues are called *Spiritualities*: This proves that *Spirit* and *Matter* are the same: For Money is *Matter*; but if *Tythe-Pigs*, &c. were called *Carnalities*, it might be as proper, only fleshly Ordinances are forbidden in the New-Testament.

I would here furnish the Quakers with a new Argument against *Tythe-Pigs*; *Swine's-Flesh* was *unclean* among the *Jewish Priests* and People, so that no Tythe of it could be paid: And the *Jewish Tythes* were the Foundation of the Claim.

Mr. *Edon* goes on, 'that the Tythes, &c. were first alienated from the secular Clergy, by Popish Usurpation, and then by Bulls and other Devices,
E. were

‘ were established for the Support of *Romish Superstition*, and *Monastick Luxury*.’

Hence it will follow that our Bishop’s present Revenues, are *Usurpations* from the Popish Donors and Possessors, and ought to be suppressed.

And that if the Distinction of the Clergy from the Laity, was an Usurpation, that ought to be suppressed too. *Paul* was a *Lay-man*: His having different Powers no more made him a Clergyman, than a Judge’s different Powers makes him one; a Clergyman’s wearing a Gown and Band does not make him cease to be a Lay-man, any more than a *Bar-rister at Law*’s wearing the same, distinguishes him out of a Lay-Character: The Difference of Clergy and Laity has no Foundation in the Gospel: *Clerus*, Clergy, meant all God’s People, as *Messiah*, anointed, meant any Man commissioned by Authority: *Cyrus*, a Heathen Prince, is called a *Messiah*: the Clergy’s assuming to themselves a Difference from the Laity, was the Source of Popery, and all the Dominion of these Spiritual Gentry, and the innumerable Mischiefs arising from it: At first in this Country, the spiritual and temporal Magistrates sat on the same Bench, this was on the Presumption, that there was truly such a Thing as spiritual Magistracy, which was false: But it is well observed, by Mr. Serjeant *Foster*, against the *Codex*, that the Tearing away of the spiritual Power from the Temporal, was a Spring of publick Unhappiness and the Root of *Anti-Christ*.

As to *Romish Superstition*, what is left of *that* still among us, is as much *Romish Superstition*, as what is taken away; but indeed, *Superstition* is all that is beyond what is *necessary* in Religion, and every *Religion* is Superstition, except that of right Reason, and moral Virtue, because either that is all that is necessary to any Society, and therefore to any Government whatever, or the Consequence may operate in favour of Popery: For once admit the Necessity,

cessity, or Expediency, of one Hierarchical Scheme of Religion to all Mankind in general, or to this or that State in particular, and it is odds, but the Popish Scheme is the most Political of any in the World, and therefore preferable.

As to *Monastic Luxury*, our *Bishops and Clergy* are equally *Monks* to the *Laity*, as the *Monks*, so called, are to *them*. I have hinted that Bishops and Presbyters were the same as Abbots and *Monks*, and probably, improved, if they did not rise, from them; And in *Luxury*, ours are not behind-hand with the Popish.

Mr. *Eaton* affirms, that ‘ the true and proper Use of those Revenues was, that they ought to have been apply’d to the Parochial Clergy: And that the Abuses of the Church-Revenues made a Reformation necessary.’

If so, those Impropriations and Tythes which belong to Bishopricks and Dignities are wrong, and ought to be given to the Parish-Priests: And Reformation is now as necessary as then. Since all, except Morality, is Superstition: Morality, or Conformity to God’s Attributes being the whole of Divinity and Religion that is requisite, and the rest Superstition, and Popish Superstition, to be *reformed*.

He complains of ‘ poor Stipends, and Pittances allotted to some of the Clergy.’ But do the Bishops use their Court-Interest to redress this or other Hardships of the Clergy in Parliament?

He speaks of ‘ *Servile Compliances* of the poorer Clergy.’ Are the richer and the Bishops guilty of no *Servile Compliances*?

He speaks, in the *Words of a Statute*, ‘ of mean Stipendiary Preachers depending for their necessary Maintenance on the Good-Will and Liking of their Hearers, and under the Temptation of suiting their Doctrines and Teaching to the Humours rather than the Good of their Hearers?’

But do not the Bishops and Clergy, who preach or write or act for Preferment, do the same as these poor Men? Therefore have we any Ground for believing their Doctrine? Were even the Apostles and first Preachers poor Stipendiary Preachers or no? And were not *they* under the same Temptation to suit their Doctrine to the Humours of their Hearers? Consequently have we any Security of the Truth of the Christian Religion itself, on this Principle?

Mr. *Eſſan* says, ' The Doctrines and Labours of a Teacher, who makes a Figure, and seems not to be poor, will be more successful? But the Apostles seemed poor, and made no Figure, yet succeeded: nor do we read, they wrought Miracles every time they preached, or very often: And if they did, *Christ* said, *Signs shall follow them that believe*: so that modern Bishops and Clergy may work Miracles, IF THEY BELIEVE; if they do not, it is because *they* are *Infidels*, and how can Infidels convert Infidels?

But I will tell these Teachers a shorter Way to succeed, and that is to be SAINTS; the People never were, are, nor will be moved by the Figure of Bishops and Clergy, so much as by their Sanctity, and Heroic Virtue would be sufficient for that Sanctity: No need of Revelation to be Saints. Let us see Bishops, &c. Men of supereminent Virtue, without so much of Wealth and Power, as many of the more glorious and divine *Heathen* Philosophers were, who contemned Opulence and Honours more than the Bishops and Clergy do, and the Work will be accomplished.

But, on their Principles, there can be no such Thing as a *Saint*; for *that* we must recur to Philosophy; to *Plato*, *Epiſtetus*, *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, &c. who pretended to no Church-Powers or Revenues, or to impose a Revelation and Creeds, as from God, on Men; nor set up an Interest and a
Party

Party to *deceive*, or what they call, *Convert*, and what Mr. *Pope* terms *Out-witting* the Rest of Mankind : Nor can I be censured for this Honour done to Philosophy, for the Revelationists have borrowed almost all from them, if not all ; *Plato*, *Aristotle*, &c. are in the *Christian* Writers and Preachers, from first to last, and Christianity is Paganism, under other Names : The Philosophers were honest Men than the pretended Saints, and Love of Wisdom, which is Philosophy, is Love of *Christ*, who was called *Wisdom*.

Mr. *Eaton* tells us, ' it will be 500 Years before all the Livings now under 50 *l. per Annum*, will be 60 *l. per Annum*.'

And in far less than that Time the State may find it expedient to discharge reveal'd Religion, especially in the modern Scheme, from its Attendance.

The Bishops ought to be more on the Square with their Presbyters ; they and the Dignitaries, and overgrown Rectors, &c. (as of *Winwick*, *Wigan*, and the like,) ought to augment the small Livings, and soon bring them all, at an Average, to at least 100 *l. per Annum* : The Bishops and Clergy at first lived in Common, and the primitive Scheme is the most apostolical and orthodox, as their own Canons express it : A Bishop ought to be ashamed to possess Thousands, when his Fellow-Presbyters do not enjoy one Hundred : And when even an Apostle called himself a Fellow-Presbyter, what sort of *Fellows* are Bishops, to be so much different from *their Fellows* ? This is not the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, but of *Simon Magus*, and will be their Destruction.

The poor Livings are not discharged from Tenths payable to the Bishops, though they are eased of the First-Fruits payable to the Crown : How shocking is that Difference, that the Crown is more generous and charitable to the Clergy, than the Bishops are to their own Brethren ? Is this Christianity ? It is high

high time to *discharge* a pretended Religion, that instead of answering the End for which it was said to be *revealed*, especially in Points of *Charity*, which is greater than *Faith itself*, inverts those Ends, and a Man would have been more humane, if he had not been a Bishop, and a Christian.

What a *monstrous Tye* is this, *Tithes* paid by the Clergy to the Bishops ! They are said to be ‘ in Exchange for Manors and Lands alienated from their Bishopricks to the Crown ; that is, the Crown took away such Manors and Lands from Bishops, as they never had a just Right to, and the poor Clergy were to be tax’d for it : Yet afterwards the Crown releases this Burden, and the Bishops continue it, on their Part ; *most Christian !* However, this is a Hint, which would justify the Crown in double-taxing the Bishops, since they tax the poor Clergy, and in alienating all their Revenues as it did their Lands and Manors : Mr. *Elton* observes, ‘ those Lands have been mightily improv’d :’ which is more than the Bishops themselves have been, or have done to Mankind ; for they have been rather worse than better for them, and therefore they have no Right to those Improvements.

Fixed Sees are no part of the Gospel Establishment : The Preaching was not, as now, Local, but Itinerant, to tell those who are ignorant of it before, the *good News* of the *Messiah* ; it could not be *News*, if constantly told them : *Evangelium* is glad Tidings, good News, and that only : So that the modern repeated Preaching the same Things over again is unchristian, and heterodox : And therefore in the Vacancy of Sees, a Christian Prince or State has a plain Right to take and keep the Temporalities on the Gospel Footing, which is the whole of true primitive Christianity according to Protestant Notions :

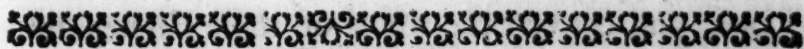
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Mr. *Eaton* relates, that Bishop *Gibson*, in his *Codex*, p. 676 tells us, the Statute of 1 *Eliz.* 19. on the Crown's taking Part of the Temporalities of the vacant Sees, was never printed in any Edition of the Statutes, but was inserted in his Book out of the Records of Parliament: The Bible, Fathers, and Councils, may have suffer'd the same Fate, and not be perfect, by Omission of something essential, or some other material Defect, inconsistent with the Demand of making Traditional Scriptures or Writings a Rule of Religion obligatory on the Conscience.

Mr. *Eaton* speaks farther of Institutions, Inductions, and other Knowledge necessary to a Clergyman.

So many Articles, that a Christian has been no Gainer by his Deliverance from the Law of *Moses*.

Though how a *Gentile* could be delivered from a Law that never oblig'd him — we leave to be explained by those who succeeded the Apostle of the *Gentiles*.



C H A P. IV.

SA C R E D Institutions themselves are not excepted from one general Observation;

That — how wisely soever Things are contriv'd and fram'd in Government,

Yet, by the constant Flux and Motion they are in, *as* constant Care and Alterations are requisite to keep them right.

Hence has risen that Variety of Canons and Constitutions in Religion, as well as Laws in the State: To adjust Property, reform Abuses, and settle Disputes:

Especially, between the Clergy and Laity, and among the Clergy themselves.

And

And without a *free Pen*, as well as a *free Tongue*, no Grievances can be well known nor stated : Therefore *free Pulpits*, within the Bounds of Property and Right, are every where necessary :

And if one should be confined and put down, let the People make another, in every House, both publick and Private ; and every Man be a *Whitefield* and a *Wesley*, in all Places to *speak* for his Country.

The Bishops and Clergy have been rigorous against their Tenants, *their Christianity* being so much a Year : And in *Daniel's seventy Weeks* came the *Messiah*, that is, in less than a Year, and a half, some cheat the Diocese all round.

Their Visitations and Godliness are not to reform the *Manners*, but get the *Lands and Manors* away : They take Surveys and Inquisitions every where, impose *Valuations* at Pleasure, as the Rule of Fines and renewing Leases : Have demolished Groves, Avenues, and Plantations raised by Gentlemen with long Care and Expence : Have endeavoured, after *Laud*, to lay aside the customary Tenure for three Lives, and convert the whole of those Estates into Leases for twenty one Years : Consequently to extinguish and subvert our Freeholds, and reduce the Number of Freeholders in every County, to make themselves Masters of the whole Nation :

They pretend they are not compellable to renew with their Lessees at the Expiration of any Life or Term : May do what they please, and ask the Difference between their Estates and those of the Laity.

Under all their Revelation, their Eyes are so dazzled with the Pomp and Wealth of this World, which they renounced *hypocritically* in Baptism, to get the more, and which is the End of *the counterfeit Poverty*, and *Self-denial* of their *queer* System, that they cannot find that Difference ; who so blind as they who *will not see*?

Yet Dr. Gray, in his ancient and present State of *Durham*, told them the Difference, — that the Laity were their Patrons and Benefactors ; therefore they ought to be moderate in renewing Leases, and encourage the Improvements of Tenants, to avoid the Evil of those *Civil Wars*, which *proud Prelates* and *rigid Clergy* had chiefly occasioned, by provoking the Laity.

The Laity *depriv'd* their Heirs and Families of their Estates for the Sake of the Church, and, as it is observed in *the Rights of Princes*, p. 117. beggar'd them too, by having their Consciences *bugbear'd*;

Though there are above 20,000 of the Nobility and Gentry concern'd, and under such *Impositions*, may be induced to go to Extremities with them :

Rigorous Exactions upon Tenants would not be justified, supposing the Church Estates were the same with others, and they might make the best Use of them.

Though by *Fiction of Law*, Ecclesiastical Corporations are said to have a *Fee*, or *Free-hold*, in their Estates ; yet, in Reality, they are only Tenants for Life ; whereas *Lay-Fees* are unconditional, pure and absolute.

The others are compared in some Books, particularly, 2 *Inst.* 627. to Tenants in Dower, who are Tenants for Life, for they are the *Dos Ecclesiæ*, the Dowry or Portion of Christ's Spouse ; but even in that, there is a Difference : For the Tenant in Dower holds in her own Right, but the Ecclesiastical Possessor is an *Usu-Fruitiuary*, not for himself alone, but for the Use and Benefit of others : They were Stewards for the Poor, &c. and as Poor, as *Alms-folks* themselves ; *Lawn-Sleeves* are Badges, that they were maintained by the Parish.

Lay-Tenants come in by *Purchase*, or *Descent*, the other, by *Free-Gift*, the Laity were the Donors :

It was a *Charity* from the Apostles Times, and properly subject to a Commission for Charitable Uses.

Tenants of *Lay-Fees* are not accountable for the Profits they make of their Estates, to any Persons: The Ecclesiastical are accountable, as, in *Dilapidations*.

At first, when a Bishop's Diocese reached no farther than one *Communion-Table* might serve, (which was *invented* for the *Offerings*) the Gifts of *Devout People* were all their Income: They endeavoured to make them *devout*, for those Gifts: And as the Bishop was as poor as the meanest, they were all maintained by them.

In the fourth Age, near the time, when *England* was converted, or, as Mr. *Pope* says, Out-witted, bubbled, *Offerings* were very great: *Constantine* made Laws permitting Churches to be endowed by Gift or Will, with real and immoveable Estates: The Rich *disinherited* their Families for them: Others, after Endowment, took back *Leases* for *Lives*, paying a yearly Revenue to the Church; but all, who *left Estates*, left them as a DEPOSIT, in TRUST, for Alms and Hospitality, and *decent Maintenance of the Clergy*; — *Lay Estates* are not in *Trust*, not a *Deposit*; the first Bishop's Church was a *charitable Corporation*, and something like *ours* at this Day.

But the Ecclesiastical Writings and others, in every Age, affirm that the Clergy ought not to possess or appropriate the Revenues of the Church, as their own; but as the Patrimony of *the Poor*; the Nation is poor, ought to take them back again, and may send the Possessors to the Army: If they be *rich*, and live on Revenues, they rob the Poor; and to defraud the Poor is the most wicked *Theft* in the World, *Gamblers* are Saints to them.

Gratian, *Dist.* 33. c. 3. speaks in this Manner: And even the Council of *Trent*, *Sess.* 15. *de Reform.* c. 1. (whose Canons are better than the *Codex*,) says the

the same. And Dr. *Straban* understands this of all *Church Ministers*, who are only the *Depositaries* of their Revenues.

The Foundation of the Church is laid on the Scheme of *Universal Beneficence*, in which is comprehended the whole Cause of Virtue, and what is *Beneficial* to Mankind : So that if *Benefices* be *Maleficial*, *Maleficent*, *hurtful*, they ought to be given to *Rationalists*, who will make them otherwise.

For, in *England*, the *National Revenues* have been vested in Trust, in the National Church, for the same Design ; and in the *Laws* and Constitution of *England*, there are *Grounds* to secure them, For the BENEFIT OF THE PUBLICK for ever ; between which *Laws*, and those, which concern Lay-fees, a wider Difference cannot be.

By the Statute of 25 *Edw. III. c. 3.* It is declared, that the Church of *England* is founded in Prelacy by the Kings of *England*, the Earls, Barons, and other Nobles of the Realm, to inform THEM, and the People of the LAW of GOD, and to make Hospitality, Alms, and other Works of CHARITY.

And that Possessions of great Value were assigned to the *Prelates and other People* of the holy Church, to sustain the Charge by the Kings and Nobles.

And the Common Law made no other Provision for the Poor, who are Provided for out of *this general and national Fund*, till the Statute of the 5th of *Queen Elizabeth*.

Indeed some Bishops have been so charitable, as, for their own Sakes, to encrease this Fund, and what they received from the Church, have returned to it, to carry on the Jobb : Only for the Sons of the Clergy the Lay-men are also invited at the Lay-men's Cost, With Fiddles, and a new Rehearsal.

Dr. *Morley*, late Bishop of *Winchester*, gave 50,000 Pounds to Works of Charity, *Eck. H. Engl.* 45. the late Bishop of *London*, Dr. *Robinson*, gave

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to the poor Livings; the present Bishop, nothing, that I know.

John Wickliffe affirmed that the King and temporal Lords or Free-holders, might, lawfully, and meritoriously, take away the Temporals and the Goods of Fortune from Ecclesiastical Men, if they habitually abuse them: 2 *Conc. J. Wickliffe Pryn.* 4. *Inst.* 244.

The Primitive Constitution of the Church and the Intent of the Laws is the same, which accounts *Alms* to be a *Divine Service*, and what is done to the *Poor*, for *God's Sake*, to be done to *God himself*; which is the true Meaning of the Words, *Deo & Ecclesiæ*, to God and the Church, often mentioned in ancient *Grants and Chartularies*, i. e. That they of the Church or Community to which such Grants are made, shall hold the Land in Succession, to be employ'd in *pure and perpetual Alms* and Hospitality, or in *Frank-almoign*, as the Lawyers speak, *Co. Lit.* 96. *V. 2. Inst. 2. Quod datum est Ecclesiæ, datum est Deo.*

To secure *this Trust*, the Common Law did not commit it to any single Person, or sole Corporation; but vested the Lands of *the See* in the Bishop, Dean, and Chapter, those Arch-deaconries and Prebendaries, in their respective Offices, the Bishop, Dean, and Chapter: Those of the Parsons and Vicars in their Patrons and Ordinaries: All these were to concur, to bind the Successor, and to hold an even and equitable Mean between the Possessor, and him, who should succeed: Therefore prescribed a Rule, to let their Estates, by customary Tenures now in Use, for their Lives, or twenty-one Years, and not, even by Consent, to go farther.

But when the Statute of 32 *Hen. 8.* vested the Power in one, and enabled the single Bodies above-named, (except Parsons and Vicars,) sole and without others, to make Leases, though the Spirit and Intention of the Act gave no more than the ordinary

nary Power to Lease for three Lives, or one and twenty Years, as it was at the Common Law, yet it was found to be too much to entrust any single Person, as the Act then stood: Devices were found out, now the Power was vested in one, to evade and destroy that Tenure: Which shews that Power in one, *Bishop* or *whosoever*, may be apt to be stretched: So that long and unreasonable Leases for Years sprung up for the Lucre of Large Fines, unknown to the Common Law, to the Loss of the Successors.

But *they* were soon condemned by the disabling Acts of the 1st and 13th of Queen *Elizabeth*, and brought to the old Practice of three Lives, or twenty-one Years: Therefore, there is nothing new in checking the exorbitant Avarice of Bishops and over-grown Clergy.

All their Revenues were *Donations*, and the Dilapidators or Spoilers of them were to forfeit their Office: Therefore the Church is said to be *infra Ætatem*, in the State of *Infants*, for of *such* is the Kingdom of Heaven; as consisting of *Donatives*; always *Babies*, and wanting the tenderest Care: So that the *Common Law*, the *State*, is the FATHER IN GOD of the Church: Its Guardian: Bishops, &c. are *Minors*, in their *Non-age*, in *Leading-strings* and *Gocarts*, but naughty Bantlings, and may want the Rod: As if the Guardian of an Infant commits waste, he forfeits his Office; because it is contrary to his Trust. 2 *Inst.* 330, and 12 *Jac.* 1. *Godbolt.* 259.

What *Waste* and *Dilapidation* of Souls, the Living Stones and Temples of the Holy Ghost, are committed by Bishops!

The Legislator is *Guardian*, and *Over-seer*, their *Bishop*, but, we hope, not such as they are.

In the 2d of *Hen.* 2. a Bill was brought in, the Effect of which was, That Lands devoutly given, and disordinately spent or misapplied by Religious and Spiritual Persons, should be seized into the King's

Hands:

Hands: That the same would suffice to maintain, for the Honour of the King, and Defence of the Realm, 15 Earls, 1500 Knights, 6200 'Squires, and 100 Alms-Houses, for Relief of the Poor: And the King would have 20,000 Pounds besides.

The Dexterity of some Bishop's-Men prevented the passing of that Bill: It shews, the Laity, who founded the Church, will not sit still, and see its Estates misapplied, or the Tenants tormented with heavy Fines and Exactions.

This in Part shews the Difference of Ecclesiastical and Lay Property.



C H A P. V.

THE *Revolution* itself supplies us with various Topicks, that enervate the Title of these Estates.

A Complaint of *Breach of Trust*, in the King, by the Advice of wicked and corrupt Ministers, was the original Cause of the Revolution; *that* was thought to have in it the Essence of *an Abdication*; to break the Trust reposed in him by his supposed Compact with the People, was deemed to be a *virtual Dereliction* of his Office, which was held on the Condition of his adhering to that Compact; and also to be a *Forfeiture of his Crown*; since it *reverted* to those who gave it on that Condition, and his Title was extinguished by his Mismanagement.

That is, the King was subject to the General Laws and Sanctions of the Constitution, and, since *the King* could do no Wrong, when he did wrong, he ceased to be King.

So if a Bishop does wrong he ceases to be a Bishop; it is a Term of Office: If he breaks the *Trust*,
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he *abdicates* his *See*, all the *Spiritualities* and *Temporalities* belonging to it: Renounces his *Office*, *abdicates* his *Authority*, and forfeits *his Regalia* and *Estate*, which are only annex'd to the rightful Possession and Exercise of his Function.

It is the same with any other Church-Officer; the Character is not indelible, but *Conditional*, and *Fiduciary*. On *Trust*, it is a *Fidei-Commissum*; a *Deposit*: As *Paul* said, O *Timothy*, keep that which is committed to thy *Trust*; what that was, we are not directly informed, but are to infer.

It would be a monstrous Supposition, that a King should lose his Crown, by a Breach of Trust, and a Prelate not lose his Estate, by the like Transgression:

With this essential Difference still, that the Office of a King is vested in him, by the reasonable Compact and Consent of the People, a Prelate's is not: It is something a-kin to nothing, *in Nubibus*, to which, at first, no rational Consent was, or possibly could be, given.

So that, strictly, he forfeits, what he had not, except *de facto*, in the mere Possession only.

The Breach of Trust, on this Head, consists in several Articles, and to be particular, in this, that their Estates were a *Trust* for *Alms*, and *Charity*, and are not so disposed of.

All their Local Powers and Rights in this Country, were a *Trust* from the Prince, who, imprudently and without the deliberate Option of his People admitted them here, on the express Condition, that they should make use of no coercive Power, no Compulsion, in their Religious Administrations, which they have done, which they have and do claim to themselves, as in their Jurisdiction, their Church-Government, Authority, their Spiritual Courts, Inhibitions, Excommunications, and the whole Frame of their Discipline: This is a direct

notorious

notorious Breach of Trust, and incurs the Forfeiture of Estates and Emoluments.

They pretend also a *Trust* from *Christ*: That was, if any, of *Souls only*, not of *Temporals*; and it was suspended on one Condition, among many others, that they should not teach for Doctrines the Commandments of Men, that they should not make void the Commandments of God, by their Traditions, that they should not exercise Authority, like the Kings of the *Gentiles*, much less, over Kings; that their Government as subordinate to his Kingdom, should not be of this World, that they should follow his Laws and Example, that they should not lay any other Foundation, but his, not betray his sole Legislative Power, by assuming a distinct one, and one that opposes his, to themselves; that they should stand fast in his Liberty, and not be entangled again in the Yoke of Bondage, either of *Judaism*, or of *Paganism*, many of whose Ordinances, Rites and Ceremonies, they have received.

This Trust, from their Lord, or his Church, his faithful People, they have manifestly violated, and incurred the Forfeiture.

They have also broken the Trust which was lodged in them by the People, by *Englishmen* and *Britons*.

Which Trust from *them*, as Men, was, a rational and moral Guidance of their Minds and Actions, to a Conformity and Acceptance with God; not as blind Guides of the Blind, as ignorant Teachers of the Ignorant, by leading them captive to what is above Reason, therefore cannot be proved Reasonable, and what is often contrary to it: What determines their Minds and Wills by the irresistible Force of an extraneous Agent, makes them, not Men, but Machines, and ruins Vice and Virtue, by making their Actions and Souls not to be their own.

They have likewise broke their Trust in the Relation of *Englishmen* and *Britons*, by setting up a
foreign

foreign Jurisdiction, and introducing here a foreign Authority: not of the Growth of this Land, or of its Laws, but Exotic, against the Spirit of the Oath, which opposes the Acknowledgement of any foreign Power, Authority, or Jurisdiction: and against the Genius of our Laws, which is jealous of the Encroachment of Strangers and Foreigners to the Commonwealth of our *Israel*.

Regeneration is a Term of the *Jewish Talmudical Law*, it meant, being *Naturalized* to the Rights of *Jews*, or a Kind of *New-Birth* from the State of the *Gentiles*, or of Nature and *Natural Religion*: So that it was rather being *unnaturalized*; and it is directly avowing that Scheme to be *foreign*, out of our Nation, into which it admits *Britons*. We were thought and called *Foreigners* to that, which therefore was *foreign* to us; *Baptism* was the Ceremony of that *Naturalization*;—as *Bathing* was the Ceremony of making Knights of the Bath; and as a Tap on the Shoulder with the Sword is a Ceremony of making other Knights to *fight under the Banner* of the Maker.

In such Points, they have broke the Trust, and incurred the Forfeiture.

They are bound to prove the Birth of *Christ* as nicely as it has been required to prove the Birth of the Pretender: They have taken upon themselves the *Onus Probandi* of this, and of all their Assertions; they cannot throw this upon the State, for they pretend to be original Governors of the Church, and Teachers of those Lay-People that compose the State; they have suggested, directed, preached, prompted, advised, the whole System: It lies at their Door.

And farther, whether they have claimed to be dependent or independent of the State, they have incurred a Dilemma;

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If Independent, by that they avow, that they have nothing to do with the State, or the State with them, as to *Estates* or *Secular Powers*; therefore have no Pretensions on the Civil Magistrate, nor can, of Right, complain, if he takes away their Secular Profits; they are *independent*;

If Dependent, they are subject to the like Qualifications of Office and Authority with others, and incur the like Deprivations and Disabilities.

King *William*, our Deliverer, was a *Dutchman*: In *Holland*, the *Calvinist Church* there is paid by the State; what Exception can our Prelates, who are properly *Calvinists*, according to the thirty-nine Articles, alledge against the like Oeconomy here?

Calvin was much concerned in Modelling the Church of *England*, and now the Whig-Bishops, as such, by their Principles of *Moderation*, in the Character of *Low-church-men*, cannot decently object to the Institution of a *Calvinian Church*, which to them is the most considerable, the most important of our spiritual Allies, the Church of our political Saviour and to us a kind of *Civil Messiah*.

At the Reformation, the Bishops and Clergy *abdicated, renounced, Popery*, their Estates are chiefly of Popish Foundation, and entirely of that Model; and therefore are, in effect, already abdicated by them: Especially as they were settled for Popish Uses, and for *those only*, with Imprecations and Anathemas to the contrary: They are not fond of being obnoxious to Curses and Anathemas, but naturally desirous of putting away the accursed Thing far from the midst of them.

They cannot object, that the Church would be in danger, for the Church is the Pillar and Ground of Truth, which never can be in Danger; and, as to the Security of the Church's being *perpetual*, in the Words, *for ever*, and *always*, and the like, inserted in the Statutes, that cannot be depended upon,

upon, for the Church of *Rome* was rather more *en-
fured* by *Magna Charta*, and other Laws, yet has
been *abdicated*: And the Law of *Moses* was promised
to be *eternal*, yet is changed by the Gospel, (though
retained by Christians:) *Perpetually* is *conditionally* so,
ex Hypothesi, i. e. if it shall be politically conveni-
ent, which is one Reason that Bishops pursue the
Court, intriguing with all that even remotely belong
to it, to keep off an Enquiry.

There is another Breach of Trust, chargeable upon
them, that they break their own Canons and Laws:
As, in one Case, in not reading twice a Year *Mag-
na Charta*, in their Cathedrals, (and many other
Instances,) as the Statute requires.

And they add Laws of their own, in distributing
written or printed Articles and Rules for Visitations,
Confirmations, &c. contrary to the Statutes, by
which they may be in a *Præmunire*.

In *France*, the Revenues of the Clergy are con-
sidered among the *Finances*, which adds to and cor-
roborates the Argument drawn from the Practice of
King *William's* Church, and amounts to a Catholick;
or Universal Consent, that the Treasurer, who is
the People's Officer in the Super-intendance of their
Cash and Substance, is the Supreme Bishop under
the King, has a right and incumbent Obligation to
dispose of their Revenues.

It cannot be pleaded, that this would cut them
to the Quick, and reduce Lawn-Sleeves, and Pud-
ding-sleeves to a State of *Querpo*, or *political Cir-
cumcision*, for a Bishop allows the Clergy as little as
He can, in all Respects, and the superiour Clergy
do the like to the Inferior, especially the poor Cu-
rates, Readers, and Subalterns, who deserve the
most, by their Labour and Attendance; therefore,
this is a direct and formal Improvement of the *Quer-
po Scheme*, which is *their own Creature*: They tear
all from the Backs of the Laity and Lower Clergy,

and, if in return, they bring all upon their own Backs, it is—*Arte perire suâ*—With what Measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Archbishop Tillotson preached some very good Sermons on *Restitution*, as an indispensable Article of *true Repentance*, that we ought to restore what has been obtained from others; in a less direct Manner that Doctrine is now preached by that Eloquent and Reasoning Primate to the Archbishops, Bishops, and Over-grown Clergy, of the present Times: It is not a *Restitution*, or *Restoration*, in a Civil View (which might in his Opinion prevent this,) but a *Spiritual*, that is enforced by that Great Metropolitan, which agrees to the present purpose.

This Revolution of abdicating Bishops, &c. might be effected with greater Facility, than the *Abdication* of King James: One considerable Deserter, on Principle, might bring it to bear, the *British* World is prepared for it, the *British* Necessities require it; a rough Shake has been given to the Prelates, and, as Mr. Bayle remark'd on *Luther's* Life, one Shake more would demolish them: The Cry is up, the Eyes of all are open.

This Point ought to be pursued, by Induction, of all the Archbishopricks, Bishopricks, and spiritual Promotions: We have unhorsed Kings, Popes, &c. have numerous Precedents, and leaving Bishops to their own Fate would be a Merit beyond that of quitting a King or a Minister of State.

In Sum, those Estates were given to, that is, some way, under some Pretence, obtained for *God* and *the Church*: The Church of *England* is the Company of the Faithful, dispersed or distressed over the Land: Charity is the Great Duty, beyond Faith; the first Charity is to the Household of Faith, the true Owners of those Estates and Powers; the next to the Church, the Nation, the People; the Faithful are the Rational and Moral, the true Patriots:

tricts: The Church is Poor, it owes more than it can pay, besides Taxes of all Sorts: It is almost broke, but does not yet run away, because we stand by one another; each says, in drinking, I'll pledge you; I'll be your Bail, your Guarantee: We are Security for one another, against Bond, Judgment, and Execution: Our Goods go of themselves to the Brokers every Year; so that these Estates for God and the Poor, are next for the Nation; the Lord (the Poor who represent him) has need of them: He has not now need of an *Abbot*, a *Bishop*, but of *Supplies*, and Bishops are only *Stewards* or *Guardians* for the Church, which is now of Age to account with them.

O Author of the *Codex*, hast thou appeal'd to the Canon Law, and to Popery? To them thou shalt go: One is a *Forgery*, and tho' supposed true, against thee: Popery was not thought Law in this Country, but treasonable; and we will avail ourselves of thy Concession, that the Common and Canon Laws are contrary to each other.

O Author of the *Trial of the Witnesses*, hast thou appealed to the Evidence of the Common Law? We demand that Evidence for every Article of thy Religion.

We demand, that ye produce and prove a *valuable Consideration* for your *Estates*; if none, they are void in Law: God's Acceptance may be obtained without your Religion: And if it should happen to be a Sin to believe you, and act by your Precepts, a Man may be damned for it.

Luther appeal'd from Popery, Infallibility, Error, Church-Authority, Canon-Law, from the Inspiration and Revelation of the Church, to Right Reason, and Divine, that is, moral Duty, as far as he could adjust it: He was a Reformer, there is no other ultimate Standard of Reforming.

Lex

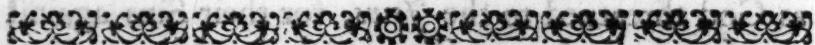
Lex non cogit ad impossibilia, the Law does not compel to Impossibilities : Bishops compel to them, by insisting on a Belief of, an Assent to a Text, an Inspiration, a Tradition, which it is impossible to prove by Common-Law Evidence : And which, if admitted, must destroy Free-Agency, and with that, all Morality and Religion, in Course : Leaving the Civil State, either with the Religion of Right Reason, which is a Conformity to the Divine Attributes, the Perfection of Religion, or without any Religion at all, and introducing National Atheism, with all its Consequences ; of which the Spiritual Imposers or Impostors will be the Criminals.

According to *Christ's* own Doctrine (which is *all* that Christians strictly have to do with, for the *Apostles* were *not* *Legislators*, much less others from them) he was, *if the Father pleased*, to come in *that Age* : *That Generation was not to pass till all was fulfilled* ; he was to come *soon, quickly, in a little while* : They are his own Words : Lo, I am with you always to *the End of the Age*, *αιωνος*, not the *End of the World*, as it is knavishly interpreted to make *the Hierarchy*, and its *Estates perpetual* ; therefore *after that Generation*, they could have no Authority, much less a *Title to Estates and Powers* 1800 Years after, or to the World's End, which may be as long before it happens, as some say, it was, before it commenced : If they begin to call any to account for these Enquiries, they may find as many Persons disposed by Degrees to call them to Account, from *first to last* ; it is a pretty long Reckoning : *Luther's* first Stroke met with Patrons, by Degrees. Truth alone is the Church, that is built on the Rock of Ages, against which the Gates of *Hades*, that is, the Incidents of Mortality, shall not prevail : Right Reason is the only Guide to Truth ; therefore they are the Church, they are the infallible everlasting Gospel, they are Christianity, and Revelation : Even *Penn*, the Quaker,

Quaker, has shewn this : These at the Bottom are the Quaker's Principles, as they are of every wise and Honest Man ; this was, really, the Patriarchal Religion, to be restored on the Abolition of *Paganism* and *Judaism* ; the Hierarchy is *Pagan* and *Judaical*, and to give Way to the Evangelical Church of Reason and Virtue, the Image of God, and the Proper Heaven of an intelligent Being : These will *cost little*, but they are Pearls of great Price in themselves ; worth more than two ecclesiastical Millions, and ought to SAVE the Money, which is a TRUE SALVATION.

For *Salvation* meant Deliverance from such Evils as God threatned to the *Jews*, for their Sins against the Law, which were Temporal, implying a *Temporal Messiah*. *Wrath to come* meant those Evils to come in this Life. The *World to come*, the World under the *Messiah*, to come in this Life. *Heaven* meant either the Air, or any Place where God favourably is, or promised to be. The *Kingdom of Heaven* meant the Time and Place of the Kingdom or Reign of the *Messiah* in this Life ; supposed to be promised by God. *Eternal Life* meant the State of *continual Living* free from the temporal Punishment of Sin in this Life, threatned by God to the *Jews* in the Law of *Moses*. *Damned* meant *condemn'd* by the Law to those Punishments. *Judgment* meant God's inflicting such Punishments here, and calling Men to Account. *Day of Judgment* meant the Time when that was to be : *Christ* said, as suppos'd, the Father only knew it ; that is, *God knows when*, which any might reveal. *Resurrection* was *Pharisaism* from *Pagan* Philosophy, preached by *Paul*, from the *Pharisees*. *Hell* meant any dark Place, Prison, Dungeon, Grave, or the Valley of *Hinnon*, where Bodies were burnt, or the Place where melted Lead was poured down the Throat of of a temporal Malefactor, call'd *Combustio Anima*, or the

the burning of his Soul, or Life away, called by *Christ*, killing the Soul: This is Scripture. Lord *Herbert* and others have proved, that God, Repentance, and a future State, were known by Reason. They are suppos'd in the Bible, not *revealed* there: And Immortality *αθάνατος* meant, that the Bodies of those, who were alive at the Coming of the *Messiah* in this World, should be preserved free from Dissolution by Fire, or the same as Eternal Life, or never punished by Fire here, &c. The Preachers who teach otherwise *forfeit their Estates* as incapacitated by Ignorance, or Seduction.



CHAP. VI.

A New Discourse on the Elements of the one Religion of a Man, a Gentleman, and an Englishman; and the Tryal of the present Religion before an English King and Parliament.

To the LAW and to the TESTIMONY;

Propositions of LAW.

THE true Principles of the COMMON LAW of *England* rightly argu'd and apply'd, are the same with those of the Common or Universal Law and Rule of Rational Nature Divine, and Human, nothing can alter, improve, transcend, or dispense with them, though the Practice may happen to vary, which ought, therefore, always to be recall'd to the Eternal Standard of those Principles; or, there will be no Standard at all, no Rule, no Maxims or Grounds, no certain Evidence or Obligation of Law,

Law, which is absurd, and will subvert all *Jurisdiction*: For,

Jurisdiction is the *Speaking*, the Decree, the Determination of *Right*, which is *Truth and Justice, Righteousness, Rectitude*, the Test of all Moral Perfection, investigated, discover'd, and establish'd by REASON: And,

The *Common-Law* is, and is, with one Voice, affirm'd by all the learned and renown'd Professors of it, to BE no other than *Pure and Tryed Reason*, the *Absolute Perfection of Reason*, the Ground whereof is beyond Memory or Register, older than the Creation, for it was in the Attributes of God; it is not only grounded on his Law, but is his Law, and what contradicts its Principles, is not nor can be admitted, as the Law of God; it extends itself to the original Law of Nature, and the universal Law of Nations; *ab origine*, it is not *Lex Scripta*, not a *Written Law*, not any *Scripture*: for not the *Writing*, but the *Reason and the Equity* are the *Foundations* of its *general and essential Authority*: If Maxims of Law admit of any Difference, those are to be prefer'd which carry with them the *most perfect* and excellent Reason;

It is the very Life of the Law: What is opposite to it is unlawful; and when the *Reason of the Law* ceases, the Law itself *generally does*, and *always ought* to cease: because it is the Basis of all of them:

Hence a *Cause* or *Judgment* was called *Ratio*, and *ponere ad Rationem* is to cite one to appear in *Judgment*: And a Garment worn by the Pope and Bishops, (they were and are the same,) was called, *Rationale*, as a Token of the highest Virtue, *que ratione & gratia perficitur*: i. e. their *Authority* was *suppos'd*, taken for granted, to be *reasonable*; and *Reason and Grace* were *thought* to concur; so that, if they want *Reason* they want *Grace*, have no Divine or Humane proper Authority, in the Eye of the *Principles of our Law*:

The Maxim, *Summa ratio est, quæ pro Religione facit*, and the like, *it is the highest Reason that makes for Religion*, implies, that Religion which is favour'd by the Law to be *reasonably receiv'd*, that there is not *Error, Falshood, Fallacy, want of due Tryal and Examination, and Consent*, otherwise that very Maxim will condemn it, for *Corruptio optimi est Pessima*; what is *best*, if corrupted, is *worst of all*.

And it is a Rule, that the *Jurisdiction* of the *Eccllesiastical Law*, or the Laws of Religion, ought to be BOUNDED by the COMMON LAW, *judg'd, limited, restrain'd, controul'd, determin'd, over-rul'd* by it: The Principles of the Common Law are the Touchstone of those of Religion; it is the superior Law; what is admitted as the positive Law of God must be conformable to the Common Law *Foundations*, or is not *the Law of God*, nor, to be held as such: Canons, Revelation, Scripture, Declarations or Cases relating to Infidels, Faith, Christianity, Inspiration, &c. must not be against *this Common Law*: If so, they are null, void, and unlawful; Reason is above *all positive Laws and Customs*; that is, the Law of Reason is that true Law of God, which tries all pretended Customs and positive Laws of God impos'd by Man; Statutes, much more Canons, are made only in Aid of the Common Law; and the Judges interpret *them* by the Reason of the *Common Law*; all *unreasonable* Statutes and Customs are void, not Statutes, nor Customs:

Magna Charta was declaratory of the *Common Law*, all Laws against it are void; it was built on the *Law of Reason or Nature*, and the *Saxon LAWS*, which were *de plano*; Our Constitution is *Gothic, Anglo-Saxon* and the *Saxon King Ethelbert* was, as a Trustee of his People, obliged, first, to have obtained the *rational deliberate* Consent of his People, before he admitted a *positive Religion* here, bringing along with it a *foreign opposite Jurisdiction*; the *Common Law* being unfavourable to *Aliens*, that are *Adversaries*,

versaries, and to all *foreign Authority* or Pre-eminence : And it is a Rule, that *Reason* is *above all positive Laws* whatever :

The Professors of the Law, who lay down these Principles, are too numerous to be all recited ; in particular *Plowden*, in his *Case of Mines*, f. 316. a. *Coke*, *Inst. par.* 2. p. 179. *Coke*, *Reports*, Pref. to Book the 8th. *Ellesmere's* Discourse of the *Post-nati*, f. 32, 33. *Bracton*, 1. 1. *Flêta*, *Proem. Com. Jur. Angl.* *Wingate's* Maxims of Law. *Coke Littl.* 97, 183. *Walsingh.* 88. *Wood's Inst.* &c.

Reason is the Judge, the Interpreter and the Check of Statutes, much more of Religion, of Parliaments, and even of the Succession to the Crown ; for Statutes have been made, though not agreed on ; many things agreed on have been omitted in the Statute ; a Statute has been made, to which the Commons have not assented ; and to which the Lords and Commons have not assented : The Revolution and Succession are void, if REASON be not the LAW : For otherwise, there being no Parliamentary Form of Writs of Summons to the Convention, King *William* could not be King, nor therefore, his present Majesty.

A Bishop, Author of the *Tryal of the Witnesses*, justifies our putting the Case in the Whole, or in any Part, whether *Reveal'd Religion* in general, or any Mode of it, or of Christianity, except *Rational Christianity*, that is, the Religion of *Right Reason*, and of the Common Law, as above, was, or could be, reasonably admitted by King *Ethelbert*, or any King of *England*.

Let us suppose, a *Missionary* from a Bishop, either before an Assembly of a King and his Council, or Parliament, or before a Judge or Jury, demanding, as from God, Faith in this Article, for instance, *Jesus* was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin *Mary*.

Faith is an obligatory Assent to a Proposition, on competent

competent Testimony enjoin'd by a Law of God sufficiently promulged.

The aforefaid Proposition contains a Matter of Fact to be duly attested by full Divine and Human Evidence of Law, without doubt.

The *Missionary* is a *Man*, and at first, appears no more to come from God, then the rest of the Company.

He must pretend to prove his Matter of Fact by *proper Testimony*, of *Writings*, *Eye-witnesses*, *Reports*, or a *Miracle*, or *Prophecy*.

The *Date of Time* of that Fact must be evinc'd, and all the Circumstances.

As for *Eye-witnesses*, he has none to produce. — He is not his own Evidence: His Writings must be authentic, genuine, original Records of the Date of that Time; truly preserved in some Court of Record; the Church he comes from, sets up to be a *Court of Record*, a *Judicature*, for it pretends to *Authority*, and to keep the *Records of the Word of God*.

He has no Writings of the Date of that time to shew: Or of less than 100 Years after, at least: For there is no History of *Christ*, in his Life-time, that shews there ever was such a Person; or till 100 Years after his Birth suppos'd:

He has no Originals of the New Testament, they are lost: He has no Records, qualified, as above, to produce:

The Date of Time cannot be proved, *jure Divino*, nor by certain Human Evidence:

There are different Computations of the Years from the Creation to *Christ*, and from him downwards; three or four Years Difference between the *Dionysian* and the *Vulgar Æra*: And more between the Calculation of *Josephus* and that of the Gospel: And if he was born in the Days of *King Herod*, who kill'd the Innocents, he was not born at all, for the Fact of *Herod's* killing the Innocents is not well attested itself, and *Herod* was dead, before *Christ* was born:

No

No Heathen or Jewish Author mentions *Christ*, till above 100 Years after his suppos'd Birth: Which is too late, and they are no Competent Testimony.

As for *Report or Hear-say*, it is too vague and indefinite, to amount to *Judicial Evidence* of the Fact: Nothing is more uncertain, than Rumour, and those Times abound with Fable and Forgery, both of *Jews* and *Christians*:

An *English* King, Parliament, Court or Jury, must think, that *Politicians*, and *Courtiers*, as *Church-Governors* essentially are, (for *their Church* is a *Court*,) and Men in a *Party-Interest*, as their Church is, will instruct *their Missionaries* accordingly, and the Presumption will rather lye against them, that God did not send them, but some body else:

So that the Holy Envoy must pretend to prove by some Miracle; that he came from God, and must speak true: That is, it is a *Miracle*, if it *be true*, or *thought so*: But no King, Parliament or Jury, can, by any Legal Evidence, judge, what a Divine Miracle necessarily is: Men may be said to work Miracles, that did not come from God: And Miracles are Arguments, not to certain Knowledge, but to *Doubt*, (which contradicts *full Assurance of Faith*,) or to *Ignorance*: For a Miracle is an Object of *Wonder*, which is built upon Ignorance: And there is so much Latitude in judging of *final Causes*, *Truth of Facts*, *Moral Intentions*, *Powers of Nature*, *Pretences of Impostors*, that no *Special Evidence of Law* can be alledged, on this Point, to form a proper judicial Determination. Since *Satan* may be an *Angel of Light*, and work lying Wonders, so may *Anti-Christ*:

They will naturally think too, that if God thought a Revelation necessary, He, being every where, would *speak himself* to the *Parliament or Jury*, and not make use of an *Attorney*, or a *Deputy*; who, very likely, comes on his own Errand, or is employ'd to bite their Heads off:

As

As yet, all is dark: At last he quotes some Prophecy, but, perhaps, his Master made it: For the Prophets were ordered to speak, not commonly to write: And we have no Records of them: But doubtful Testimonies, that require other Testimonies, and so on, *ad infinitum*, to adjust them:

And the Fact cannot be proved true by the *Prophecy*, because the *Prophecy* is to be proved true by the Fact as its Accomplishment; so that it is a Circle in Argument, and begs the Question: And if what some very Christian Divines hold be true, that God does not foresee future Contingencies, because only what is certain can be the Object of certain Knowledge, there can be no such thing as Prophecy:

Here good King *Ethelbert*, his *Counsellors*, *Judges* and *Jury* stick, and they, and the *Heavenly Courier* are, reciprocally, at *Gape-stare*; no Evidence of Law, that God sent this Ambassador.

But, He may be by *Common Law*, an *Impostor*, and as such, punishable:

Now, as there can be no Obligation to *Faith*, which is an *Assent upon Testimony of a Matter of Fact*, without proper Testimony, so if there be any Statutes or prevailing Maxims of Law against *Infidels*, they are to be consider'd as *Error*, with Submission, if the *Testimony as the only efficient Cause and Ground of Faith*, cannot be produc'd: And Bishops, claiming from such as suggested those Laws and Maxims, are accountable to *bring that Testimony before the Court*:

If that Text be alledged, *what part hath he that believeth with an Infidel?* 2 Cor. vi. 15. that Book ought to be prov'd, by *Evidence of Common Law* (which is *Reason*, and every *Englishman's Birth-Right*, *Antecedent and Superior to all written or Scriptural Laws*, and *over-ruling all of them*,) to have been written by *St. Paul*, that we have his Original, or a true Copy; and that it is the Word of God, not of Man:

It ought to be shewn, in Law, who is a Believer, and who an Infidel; whether an Infidel is not one *Unfaithful*, who *breaks his Trust*, a Trustee of the People who violates his Compact, and *commands a Religion contrary to Reason*:

There are many more Exceptions, to *the Case of an Infidel*, in *Law and Gospel*; Belief, which is *in the Heart*, is not cognizable in Law, nor, therefore, is *Infidelity*: *Jews*, who are called *Infidels*, are not now deem'd, *Perpetui Inimici*; *Infidels* in the respective Times of *Christ*, of the Apostles, of this or that Age or Sect, of Popery, of the Reformation, of this Age, &c. differ in Construction of Law itself, as well as in other Lights; *Peter* declar'd an Infidel, *Cornelius*, *accepted by God*, who has *no Respect of Persons*, but the *Righteous*, in any Nation: Bishops may be Infidels in Speculation and Practice: All this requires a Discourse: As also do the Exceptions to *Paul's* Evidence, as an illegal Head of a rebellious Faction, a *Visionary*, *stigmatiz'd*, *non compos*, &c. 2 Cor. xii. 1. *Acts* xxvi. 19. — and xix. 9. 2 Cor. xii. 2. *Acts* xxvi. 24. &c.

In all Cases, where the Scriptures or the Bible are urg'd, there must be *Averment of Certainty* what they are: For the Bible read in Churches is not the Bible order'd by the Canons of 1603, nor that of the 39 Articles.

And as to *Inspiration*, it is not cognizable by any Court, being an internal Impression on the Mind; unless it may mean *Reason* itself, or the *Rational Soul*, given to Man at the same time with the Breath of Life inspired into him, and this is the only possible *Common Law* Notion of it: Otherwise, by necessitating the Thought and Will, it *destroys Free-Agency*, and therefore all Religion, Virtue, Society, and Government. And one Text shews, what *Inspiration* is, the WIND bloweth, where it listeth, and thou canst not tell, whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the

SPIRIT;

SPIRIT; *i. e.* it is like WIND, a FLATUS, a PUFF; Spirit, רוּחַ, Ruach, in Hebrew is WIND: a Father of the Church, Dr. Swift, has made such *in-spir'd*, or *in-blown*, ÆOLISTS: The Spirit of God, Gen. i. 3. meant a *strong Wind*; and it came on the Apostles; it has *blown* some People *Profit*: And if it would serve *them*, as *Job's Wind* did his House, others would be *profited* in earnest:

When the Antient Common-Law, and Statute-Law interfere, the Common-Law shall be prefer'd; therefore when Reason and Revelation interfere, Reason shall be prefer'd: Coke, 1 *Instit.* 115.

Where a Statute gives a Remedy to a Mischief or Defect, it shall be presum'd, there was none before at Common-Law, and the Reason of the latter interprets the former: *Vaughan* 179. 2 *Inst.* 301. *Raym.* 191. 335. 3 *Rep.* 7. therefore, if the *Common-Law*, if *Reason*, had before a Remedy, as to *Salvation*, *Acceptance with God*, *Order in the State*, and other pretended Advantages of *Revelation*, the *Statute* is useless, void, and of no Efficacy, because not necessary. This will cut off all the Pleas from Statutes and Canons, relating to positive Religion, if the *Remedy* pre-existed at *Common-Law*:

The *Intent of the Legislators* is a Rule in the Construction of Statutes, they *intended* right Reason, Truth, Justice; if *Revelation* contradicts *them*, it contradicts *the Intention of the Legislators*; it was not their *Intention* to establish and enact *Falshood*, *Inconsistency*, *Immorality*; therefore *True Rational and Moral Society*, is the only Church and Religion, by Law established, in *the Intention of the Legislators*.

In the Eye of the *Common Law*, the only Bible and Scripture, are the *Rational and Moral Texts*, or such as admit that Use, so far only; Eternal Righteousness, Justice, and Truth, upright Honesty, the Right of the Case, and the Reason of the Thing, must always govern the Sense of Scriptural Expressions: For Justice and Righteousness are the
same

same in Heaven as they are upon Earth; and if the Notion of it was not the same in both Places, it would be vain to tell us, that God is just and righteous, for we could not tell what that meant; and more vain to bid us be like him in those Divine Perfections, if we did not know them, when we see them. Therefore the *Common Law*, which is the most perfect Reason and Justice, in its Principle, is the best and the only *Divinity*; and answers all the Ends of any sort of *Theology* or *Religion*, natural or pretended to be *reveal'd*. Loyalty is Legality, by Law, Reason; Devotion is to be devoted to the Practice of it, Books and Forms of Devotion may be needless, superstitious, and worse; To be Godly is to be Godlike, which is, to be Rational. Piety is Duty, this is the whole Duty of Man. Reason is all in *Controversy*; it is the whole *Text of God*, the Scripture of Truth, written on the Heart: It is *Logos*, *Christ's Name*, the *Word of God*, and was it duly practis'd, no other Law would be requisite; we know nothing of God but his Attributes, which are sum'd up in Two Words, Right Reason.

In a Preface to a *Codex*, one who has ruined *Christianity, the Church, and his Reputation*, by setting up for an *Ecclesiastical Politician*, (every Man has not a *Genius* for a *Scaramouche*.) tells us, ' that there is a *Common Law Spiritual*, that Ecclesiastical Matters ought to be interpreted by Ecclesiastical Rules, that those Ecclesiastical Laws were made about the Matters they contain, that the Design of those Statutes was to strengthen those Church-Laws, not to drag them into the Channel of the COMMON LAW TEMPORAL, which is UNNATURAL to them, and in which it is impossible for them to thrive.'

But the REASON of the *Common Law* was prior to, and over-rules, all *Customs, Canons, Statutes, and positive Laws* whatever, which destroys the *Codex-Principle*: This Bishop confesses a Contrariety, an UNNATURALNESS, of one to the other, therefore

he annihilates his *Common Law Spiritual*, since even a *Statute* is not Law, if it contradicts the *REASON* of the *Common Law*, much less the *fabulous Traditions* of the Church, called by Him, the *Common Law Spiritual: Habetis Consistentem Reum*; let the *Codex* and its Friends beware of a *Præmunire* or *Constructive Treason*, in giving us a *Revolution-Pope*, And *Whig-Cardinals*; in all contradictory *Religions*, as in *Propositions*, but one can be true; that of *Revelation*, if contradictory to *Reason*, is false: And the *Religion of Reason*, is the one only true Religion of the *Constitution*, because, of the *Common Law*, whose *Principles are its Law*: this is the only Church by Law established, *de jure*, in the *Intention of the Legislature*, and by the Ecclesiastical Authority's being bounded by the *Common Law*:

This explains the *Clauses* in *Statutes*, of *Canons* obliging, when they are not contrary to the *Laws of the Land*: *Reason*, the Soul of the *Laws*, determines them, and *Canons*, on a Religion, incapable of *Common Law Evidence*, are contrary to the *Laws of the Land*; it is our *Birth-right* to insist on *Common Law Evidence*:

The *Title, Holy Bible*, was made by *Man*, not *God*; nor did *God collect or make that System*: there is a *History* of it, by *Mr. Stackhouse*; some tell us, it is a *Free-thinking Book*, in producing *Objections* which he has not answered, if so, it may be freely thought upon, and either he could not, or would not, answer them: If he could not, he makes it an *unholy Bible*; which is a very short *History* of it: If he would not, it is the same: But then, he is an *Anti-Scripturist* himself, and refutes his own Book about *Anti Scripturists*: and we don't doubt, but *Bishops and Clergy* will explain themselves out of the *Bible*, on occasion, as dextrously as they have out of the *Pope's Supremacy*, (or any Point that pinches them,) though they object to *Principles*, *Infidels*, *Schism* and *Heresy*; for *Tradition* is as good for that as for the *Bible*; *Revelation* and *Popery* may be

be much the same: and when one told *Vossius*, he believ'd any thing but the Bible, *Vossius's* Reply had more Wit, that He who could believe *that*, might believe any thing.

One Syllogism is at the Service of *Revelation-Jobbers*, to prepare them for shutting up Shop: But as it will contain many Articles, a short enumeration of those Articles, may properly precede it:

A Mode of reveal'd Religion, or Christianity, the Ruins of Popery, is impos'd, by High-Priests, pretended authoritative Preachers, Leaders, and original Prompters of it, mere sinful Men, by a Commission from God, as a matter of Fact, prophetically and morally necessary, with Claim of Obligation on Free-born *English-men*, under the severest Penalties, to believe and practise it: With Rights, Dignities, Revenues, Powers, and Pre-eminences annex'd to it: History and Experience teach us, that it has been attended occasionally with Acts of Wrong, Violence, Deceit, Forgery, Insults on Human Nature, Absurdities, Disturbances, Dishonour of *English-men* and their Families, Depravation of Understanding and Manners, Perplexities, Errors, *Difficulties and Discouragements innumerable*; Trespas, Damage, Persecution, Misdemeanor, Oppression, Tyranny, and all Mischief:

God would (if it was His) and could, give it all the Evidence, which his Attributes, and those of a Rational and Moral Being require, in every Article; that it be incontestably clear and intuitive, self-evident, with Demonstration of the Spirit, Consistent, All-commanding, True, Perfect, Undoubted, Immutable, Wise, Good, Just, without Spot, or Wrinkle, or any such thing, Holy, and without Blemish: Without Ambiguity, Uncertainty, Doubt, or Equivocation, entirely Satisfactory to all, making a right Use of their Reason, duly exercis'd and improv'd:

The *Imposers*, that is they, who from such as originally suggested and taught it, by Succession in a Body Corporate, still do the same, and penally enjoin

enjoy it, as above, are unable to prove it by such Evidence;

And they pretend it is dangerous to let the People know this: they insist, some Craft, some Delusion, some Idol, some Story to play with, in Religion, is necessary to order the People: That is, Irreligion is a necessary part of Religion: And to cry, *stop Thief*, is dangerous to honest Men; the *Screen* is the *Creed*:

These *Imposers*, avowing the Necessity of *Fraud* in Religion, confess they are *Impostors*; they *plead for it*:

And otherwise, *Imposers* of what they cannot so prove, are *Impostors*:

They are obnoxious to all the Forfeitures and Punishments which the Common and Statute-Laws direct in such Cases, according to their Crimes, and the Aggravations of them, from first to last:

The Syllogism is, such *Impostors* are accountable, but High-Priests, &c. of such Religion are such *Impostors*; *Ergo*:

And least they should complain, that he, who demolishes and can't build, is no Mason, I will present them with a Description of that Religion, which ought to be Parochially preach'd, instead of theirs:

It is such a one as is founded on a sincere Disposition and an active Endeavour, to our Power, according to our Circumstances in Life, whereof each Person is a prudential Judge, to consider, understand and practice his Duty in all Relations, especially to Mankind, as a rational Community under God, its head, and to his Country; conformably to the Principles of Right Reason, the Attributes of God, and the Nature and Relations of Persons and Things; by the most assiduous and universal Exercise and Improvement of intellectual, moral and political Truth, Justice, Equity and all Virtue; holding this to be Revelation, Christianity from *Christ* the *Logos*, or *Reason*; Scripture, the Word of God, his Worship, or *λογικὴ λατρεία*, reasonable Service for the utmost Perfection, Dignity, Interest and Happiness of our Nature, of the intelligent World, and of our Country;

Country ; and as a Point of Self-preservation, and Self-defence, guarding and advancing the prior Rights of Humane Nature and our Country, against such as would impose on, prejudice, oppress, impoverish, distress and enslave them, therefore put themselves in a State of War with, and are Aggressors on all Mankind, our selves and our Country.

The Particulars of this may be easily deduc'd, *i. e.* rational and moral Education, and Example, especially among our Superiors, on this Plan, every where enforc'd, would soon produce a happier Scene of Affairs than any reveal'd Religion ever did, or can create, and make the World a PARADISE REGAIN'D ; for to be, and do Good is the Whole of true Religion and Politicks, Perfection and Heaven.

It is unreasonable, it is repugnant to Common Sense, that God, who can do nothing in vain, and is *every where*, Should make use of a *Messenger*, or a *Mediator*, or *Legate*, as Mr. Warburton in Complaisance to Mr. Pope, and to merit his *Legacy*, in his Divine *Legation* of *Moses*, makes him a *Legate à latere* from God to the *Jews*.

That the Books ascrib'd to *Moses* were written by him, or by God's Commission, either in any Manuscript that can be nam'd, or any Copy, much less in a printed Book, or Version, never was, nor can be prov'd.

That God sent *Moses*, because he omitted a future State, is to say, that Mr. Warburton is a Reasoner, because he omits reasoning to the Point ; and that is never given as a Reason for it, by *Moses* himself, or the Bible.

That God sent *Moses*, because the Law given by *Moses* could not be from any but from God, is false : For Human Reason, then, might have constituted that Law : And, in the East, God's speaking was the Style, whether he literally spoke or no.

That *Moses* was sent from God, because God gave actual Rewards and Punishments according to the Sanctions of that Law, to the *Jews* in this Life,

is false: for *there was one Event to the Righteous,* that is, seemingly, *and the Wicked,* says *Ecclesiastes,* none were *righteous, no, not one,* rigorously, by the Law; in God's Sight none could be justify'd: Cursed was every one who did not continue in all Matters of the Law to fulfil it; which none could do, nor ever did: The Scriptures, on some keeping all the Law blameless, are contradictory, as they are in every thing that is Moral: Therefore they are no one Rule: And for this Cause, so many Sects and Religions have, and ever may plead the Scripture: They are as Equivocal and Inconsistent, as all that is called *Jesuitism*: And *Moses* could not come from God, because his Law was impossible to be kept, none being oblig'd to an Impossibility: And *Christ* gave no one System of Law at all, but occasional Precepts: *Whiston* himself thinks that, and that the only System of *Christian Law* being the Apostolical Constitutions, no true Copy of which is extant, he, therefore is no *Christian*, but an *Infidel*; as, if he be an *Eusebian*, he is a *Knave*, as *Eusebius* was: Notwithstanding all his Stir about the Trinity, he is, by consequence from his Suspicions of *Athanasius*, and from his Writings and Actions, an *Athanasian*; or worse: Indeed, he has no Religion, having no Morality, for he does Evil that Good may come of it, and does not practise his own Rules, thinks he does God Service, by unreasonably diserving other Men, and has had a Tool's Pension.

As to the Bishop's and Clergy's Possessions, a Defender of them, who tells us, his Religion is that of the Primitive Church, gives them up: There was no one Primitive Church: Traditions and Churches vary'd and contradicted each other: And in those Times, there were no *Sees* nor *Living's*; nor *Tythes*, which must belong to *Benefices*; the Judaizing Christians might freely give Tythes to the Poor and the Bishops together: But *Judaism* is *Anti-christianism*.

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He tells us, God might communicate his Thoughts to Man, because he gave Man a Power to impart his Thoughts to another : It is false, Man does not impart his Thoughts, but uses Sounds or Words agreed upon to be Signs of what are suppos'd to be his Thoughts : — They may not be his Thoughts which he expresses :

And God has *no Thoughts* : *Thoughts* are plural, there is no Plurality or Composition in God ; God cannot be said, philosophically, even to have a Power of thinking, for he has essentially the perpetual necessary Act of thinking, which excludes the *Power*, as finite Beings may be presum'd to have it abstracted from *the Act*.

God's Thoughts are not as our Thoughts in all Respects ; they are more morally so, than intellectually : His Righteousness is as Man's, but his way of knowing all Things possible at once always, differs from the manner of *Operation* in the Human Understanding : But it agrees in this, *Right Reason*.

The Thought of God is Omniscience, which is incommunicable to Man ; and, morally, it is impossible that God should *reveal himself* to Man, after his first sufficient Revelation, by giving him the Faculty of Reason. For either God made a perfect, sufficient Plan or not ; if not, he was not perfectly and sufficiently wise, true, good and immutable : If he did, he could not do after what was needless, and therefore, another Revelation would destroy his Attribute of all-perfect, sufficient, immutable Wisdom, deny his Being, and be *Atheism*, and as attended with Immorality and Mischief, *Diabolism* ; no Estates or Rights belong to its Imposers, but the contrary.

In one Word, to *believe*, is an Assent on Testimony, with sufficient Reason, or without, or against it ;

If with sufficient Reason, there is no more of Religion or Merit in it, then in believing any Fact or Proposition in History, because the Assent is the necessary

necessary Effect of the Perception of sufficient Evidence; so that, admitting it right, it is no Religion at-all, that is built on it: Which puts an End to reveal'd Religion built on Faith, and makes Believers mere Historians.

If without or against sufficient Reason, as in this Case, it is not Faith, but Credulity, Temerity, Superstition, Blindness, Ignorance, or a Belief of an Absurdity, which is a Belief of nothing, for Absurdities are Contradictions, which are Non-entities; and so are, in *this Respect*, the *Believers*; we wish them Joy of their Annihilation: The Poem upon *Nothing* is *their Creed*.

If it be produc'd by *Grace* or *implicite Obedience*, it is not the rational Act of the Believer, but of another, who believes for him, or determines his Mind and subverts his Free-agency: They are no *Men*, but Monsters, walking on others Legs.

And, in some, it is direct Presumption against any Thing whatever, when *Belief* is so much insisted on: A Crowd about a Mountebank, may be an Assembly of very FAITHFUL People: Take my Pills, and if you die, NEVER BELIEVE me more: Which may be thought a FAITHFUL EPITOME of about five Million Waggon-loads of Divinity from the *Bodleian Library* and all round it, to the primitive Mother Cathedral in *Grub-street*.

To be willing to believe, if you can, is Faith in God's Sight; so that *rational Infidels* are *Believers* in the truest Way; and *not to believe rationally* is *not to believe* at all in *God's Sight*, who gave *Reason* and made the *Use of it* a *Duty*;—therefore *Believers* are, in reality, *Infidels*, in the *worst Sense*, where I leave them.

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